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The cover was inspired by J Librach's poem, "To Clewell," located on page 67. The poem opens with the quote, "Now, if you'll excuse me...I'm being followed by a moon shadow... Over and way out." The photo was taken with a Pentax Spotmatic F on Kodak Portra 400 film by Abbey Dobbs. Design by Molly Del Rossi and Hunter Murray.

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# Feminist Manifesto Creative Explication

**Genevieve Buchanan**

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## *Abstract*

Mina Loy's "Feminist Manifesto" was written in 1914, around the time of the modernist revolution in poetry in the United States. She penned this aggressively toned piece to open women's eyes to their place under the patriarchy and steps they should take, however drastic, to fight against its influence on their lives. Her work was unpublished during her lifetime, as it was intended merely as a letter to fellow writer Mabel Dodge Luhan. However, after its eventual publication in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, a collection of her poems, this fiery work was available to all. This paper will analyze the literary elements of tone, diction, and form found in the "Manifesto," as well as their effect. Additionally, these effects were attempted to be mimicked in a piece inspired by Mina Loy's work.



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If a person could emerge from the womb hating the patriarchy, Mina Loy certainly would have. She was born in 1882 into a wealthy, middle-class family, but rebelled against the traditional values and expectations upheld for her (Poetry Foundation, 2023). As she entered her thirties, she became a member of the United States' modernist revolution in poetry. Although Poetry magazine was created as a part of this movement, its edition considered Loy too "radical" (Poetry Foundation, 2023). However, others commended her honesty and willingness to advance in new directions, such as her mentor, Mabel Dodge Luhan. Luhan was known internationally as the "New Woman" and described as a "sexually liberated radical" (Burchfield Penney Art Center, 2023). Blessed with wealth from her family, she created a salon in 1912 for creatives with progressive and revolutionary ideas.

Luhan's acceptance of concepts and beliefs outside what society would consider safe is perhaps what gave Loy the confidence to send her a piece she penned in 1914. Loy titled it the "Feminist Manifesto," but never finished it, likely intending for it to go unpublished. However, after her death, it was printed and distributed, eventually becoming arguably her most widely known work. In *Feminist Manifesto*, Loy used assertive tone, diction, and form in support of hyperboles surrounding her central theme of the necessity of change.

Loy utilized an assertive tone throughout her piece to ensure she passed her message along to her audience. She sought to give women the desire and motivation to reclaim their bodies and minds as their own rather than an object for men's use. In Karabulut's 2020 article "Futurism and Feminist Performativity," they discuss the impact of the Futurist movement on Loy's writing. Futurism, as defined by Britannica, is the "goal of discarding the art of the past and celebrating change, originality, and innovation in culture and society" (White, J. James, 2023). Futurist manifestos make a clear declaration as an intent to make something happen and Loy clearly drew upon these ideals in her writing, as she opened her work with a sentence intended to make a statement by saying that "the feminist movement as at present instituted is inadequate."

As she was writing in 1914, "feminism" was still a fairly new word, as it had begun to infiltrate American discourse in the early 1910s (Rabinovitch-Fox, 2017). The traditional role of a woman was to be demure and reserved, to be the domestic caretaker of the home and children, and to be a servant to their husband (Blackstone, Amy, 2003). Loy's aggressive tone provided a direct contrast to the feminine ideal of a nurturing and caring woman. She continued to utilize this tone throughout the entire piece, demanding that women "leave off looking to men to find out what [they] are not—seek



within [themselves] to find out what [they] are.” This is a demand for women to address their self-perception; they should not define themselves based on an idea of masculinity and their differences from it, but should instead look inward to their own idea of femininity and progress from there. Her tone left no doubt as to her opinion on the urgency for change.

Loy utilized forceful diction to provoke change. In her first paragraph discussing its necessity, she stated that women need to undergo a “devastating psychological upheaval” (Loy, Mina, 1914) to fully realize themselves. She described their current situation as based on the “lies of centuries” and the “rubbish heap of tradition.” This upheaval would be on the basis that women throughout time had (and have) accepted their given role as a submissive caretaker. Traditional patriarchal ideas consider women to be “inferior” (T., 2015), and are so pervasive that society unconsciously believes them to be true, men and women alike. Though it may be difficult, Loy said that it was absolutely necessary for women to subvert the patriarchy and begin to claim their own power and create their own definition for the role of women. The present state of the feminist movement at the time was not enough—she demanded “absolute demolition.” This word choice is extremely intentional. Those wishing to truly make a change must not do it half-heartedly, instead, they must destroy the gender roles and conventions that limit women to their secondary roles.

She claimed that women’s only choices were between “parasitism, & prostitution—or negation.” She uses parasitism as a metaphor for marriage, as the wife at this time completely survived off her husband’s career and reputation. However, if a woman did not manage to get married, her only options were to be a prostitute, with her worth defined by her body and sexual prowess, or she faced negation, the denial of her personhood and value. These options are all bleak, exposing the unfairness of the state of women’s options at the time. Later in the work, she discusses the fact that women have begun to have the chance at professional and commercial careers, but follows it with the extremely pointed question, “is that all you want?” Her diction is meant to be scalding to the reader, goading them into wanting more. They should want to find a level without prejudice, instead of forcing themselves into a world where men reluctantly relinquish any kind of control. The way Loy spoke about this topic makes it plain that women should not accept anything less than a complete upheaval of and deviation from the societal norms to which they were accustomed.

Throughout this piece, Loy experimented with the form of the printed word and its appearance on the page in order to draw attention to specific ideas. She used hyphens throughout to draw pauses and emphasis to ideas she

found extremely important and thought-provoking. Additionally, in the fifth paragraph, she discussed denying the idea that woman is the equal of man, using space to separate from the next lines “for she is NOT!” This places weight upon one of the central ideas of this work—woman is not the equal of man, which is an issue that needs to be resolved. However, the most prominent use of form is in the words scattered throughout which are larger than the rest of the text and underlined. This makes the work more of a performative art piece that leads the reader, almost by hand, to the key things of focus.

She begins with a focus on the word “women,” showing her intended audience. About halfway through the work, she informs her audience that the first “illusion” they must demolish is the division of women into two emphasized words: “the mistress, & the mother.” This dichotomy was coined by Sigmund Freud in 1905 and stated that women in general fit into two boxes: “good, chaste, and pure Madonnas” or “bad, promiscuous, and seductive whores” (Bareket, et al., 2018). Women can be sexual or maternal, but the two should not mix. However, Loy placed an emphasis on these words to immediately show her disdain for them, following it by saying that “every well-balanced & developed woman knows that is not true.” As women seek to find themselves and provide for the next generation, they must balance the idea of their sexual and maternal selves to truly find fulfillment.

For a woman to be considered “superior,” her children should be the result not merely of sexual contact with her husband, but of “a definite period of psychic development in her life.” Loy is making the stance that becoming a mother should be a purposeful decision. Women should be able to have sex outside of a child-generating context and should only enter the maternal role when they have reached the point that they feel ready. In this statement, Loy is alluding to, without directly mentioning, birth control, which was a highly controversial topic. A wide variety of birth control devices were available in America in the 1870s but were outlawed by Congress in 1873 via the Comstock Law (Public Broadcasting Service, 2023). Margaret Sanger, another “radical,” published works stating that women should have control over their own bodies and childbearing. She faced intense scrutiny from conservatives and was eventually indicted for nine violations of the Comstock Law (Casacelr et al., 2018). As Sanger coined the term “birth control,” Loy did not have the same vocabulary but agreed that it would play a large role in making women’s lives their own.

Loy additionally used bolding and underlining to support the hyperboles permeating this work. One such hyperbole is found in the tenth paragraph, where she described men and women as “enemies, with the enmity of the exploited for the parasite, the parasite for the exploited.” In her terms, men

and women both use and are used. They both have things to gain from each other and latch onto one another to gain those things. However, this is not a symbiotic relationship; there is hatred between them, as they cannot agree upon a common goal. Loy claims that the only point at which there is a common interest is in “the sexual embrace.” This is an obvious exaggeration, but it is used to introduce an important thread for the rest of the piece—the idea of sex and its importance in society and relationships.

It is so important that she makes the highly provocative claim that women should undergo “the unconditional surgical destruction of virginity.” The idea of women and girls being forced to undergo surgical removal of their hymens is obviously farfetched and drastic, but it proves her point. At that time, a woman’s worth was found in her “purity,” or lack thereof. If no women were found to be pure in that way, they were more likely to have worth based on their actions and aspirations rather than an arbitrary concept passed down through generations. She ends her writing by stating that women must realize that “there is nothing impure in sex.” This idea would bring about the absolute demolition she spoke of at the beginning of her essay, leading to women finding their true power, not being trapped in subordination to men.

Mina Loy’s “Feminist Manifesto” is a compelling work detailing the problems pervading modern society. Although she put her pen to paper over a century ago, many of the issues from Loy’s time have not yet been resolved. Although a growing number of women are joining the workforce, many still find themselves the sole or foremost domestic caretaker. Their husbands, however well intentioned, often find themselves comfortably relaxing into the traditional male pattern of coming home after work to a clean home and a hot meal, forgetting (or choosing to ignore) the reality that their wives also work a nine-to-five. Women are still served with looks of confusion or disappointment when the query of “so, when are you starting a family?” is met with “I am not planning on having children.” As the media portrays women as sex objects, they are still expected to conform to centuries old ideas of purity, with the same standards not being placed on the opposite sex. I believe Loy had the right idea—absolute demolition may be more necessary now than ever to finally reach true equality and find a new definition of the feminine ideal. I attempted to embody her ideals in my own work using underlining and enlarging stimulating words and through keeping the same sense of urgency.

## CREATIVE REPRODUCTION

Trapped in a society that values more the state of their hymen than the state of their mind, women are told that their value must come from their bodies, but if they use their bodies for their own purposes, they are berated with terms like “slut” and “whore.”

Comments are full of men saying, “this is why I never want a daughter” and “fatherless behavior” as if these are not the types of girls they drool over and who fill their waking thoughts. Their anger comes from the realization that they will never touch this girl, this ideal of divine feminine in that moment.

What those men do not realize is that she has power over them.

A woman's body exudes power if she chooses it to. Her body is a currency, and if utilized in the right way, can force men to bend to her will.

However, this is not true freedom. This power comes at a cost: the loss of “purity,” an outdated ideal that is still deeply ingrained into our minds. Sex is surrounded with this idea of shame and guilt; there is no true freedom in this.

True freedom comes when a woman and her body are celebrated in the same way that men are, a slap on the back and congratulations at the latest story of a sexual conquest, girls will be girls in the same way that boys will be boys.

Until sex is no longer viewed as impure, women will not truly have freedom.

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# The U.S. Prison System: Pseudoscience in an Empirical World

**Megan Cox**

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## *Abstract*

This paper reflects on and acknowledges current issues within the U.S. prison system and discusses the feasibility of solutions that can be implemented to reduce the rate at which individuals reoffend, often referred to as the recidivism rate. While other countries are working to increase normalcy in prisons and decrease sentence lengths, the U.S. builds maximum security facilities and sentences individuals to an extraordinary amount of time. Although the U.S.' approach is outdated, many people have been working to improve the system and reduce the recidivism rate. The U.S. will be compared to other countries to show key differences that correlate to the U.S.' increased incarcerated population and recidivism. Multiple implementation ideas, such as post-secondary education, will be offered to show ways that the U.S. can reduce the recidivism rate and the number of individuals behind prison walls. In no way should this paper be taken as slander towards current policy makers, police officers, or correctional officers. The purpose of this paper is to look at some major issues and discuss solutions in the big picture. It is not being used to point out flaws of individuals. At the end of this paper, ideas of implementation will be discussed to show how change in the U.S. is possible. Change does not have to be big or take place inside of prison walls to be effective. Implementation of a new approach is necessary in the U.S. to reduce recidivism.

*Keywords:* recidivism, prison education, economics of crime, rehabilitative justice, overcrowding, alternative sentencing, re-entry, mass incarceration, drug policy, sentencing, international human rights, United States prison system



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## Introduction

The incarceration process has been debated for centuries. Who should be imprisoned? How long should they be imprisoned? What rights should these individuals retain? Each country has unique answers to these questions. The amount of options begs the question, “what are the best and worst approaches?”

The United States (U.S.) makes up less than five percent of the world’s population, however, it holds almost 25 percent of the world’s prison population. The incarcerated population has increased by 700 percent since 1970 and by nearly 250 percent since 1990.<sup>1</sup> The problem of mass incarceration in the United States formed its roots during Richard Nixon’s presidency due to his war on drugs and continued to expand over the next three decades as the U.S. fought against drug use through increased criminalization. Now, more than fifty years after the introduction of mass incarceration, reformers and researchers are coming forth with data comparing the U.S.’ system to other countries to show how mass incarceration has added to the problem of decreased quality of life. Comparing data with other countries shows the reality of the failing system and offers ideas for change. There are numerous approaches on ways to reform the U.S. prison system. This paper will compare countries and provide insight on ideas and programs that can improve conditions in prison—reducing the recidivism rate and economic impact that the prison system has on citizens in the U.S. To understand how the U.S. can implement global approaches, one must know about the differences between the U.S.’ prison system and the prison systems of other countries, as well as current programs implemented in the U.S. that are seeing successful results at lowering the recidivism rate.

The U.S. prison system is seen as being harsher than other countries due to the disrespectful treatment, poor conditions, lack of training, and greater sentence lengths. Learning how other countries treat their incarcerated populations may be shocking to people in the U.S. The U.S. has been caught up in the idea that mass incarceration and longer sentences will lead to rehabilitation. It will be shown that sticking closer to normalcy, creating strong relationships, and shorter sentence lengths are what leads to true rehabilitation.

While the U.S. prison system may have an aggressive approach, people have begun to acknowledge the faults of the system and implement changes to reduce the recidivism rate and reform the system. Education programs are being implemented in prisons and staff are finding that their students rarely commit another crime after receiving an education. Although formal

<sup>1</sup> American Civil Liberties Union, “Mass Incarceration,” *Smart Justice*, Accessed November 19, 2021, <https://www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/mass-incarceration>



education is helpful for some, it is not the words in textbooks that decrease the recidivism rate amongst these individuals. Education reduces recidivism by providing tools of critical thinking, time management, and planning to increase an individual's awareness to solutions for a problem, and ultimately teaches how to navigate the world outside of prison walls. With the U.S. being a country with a higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP), economics of crime is not often first to mind when discussing the prison system. However, the U.S. economy has suffered greatly from a loss of money because of its broken system because as more people are incarcerated they increase the risk that their children may face homelessness, poverty, and incarceration. As the U.S. puts more of its citizens behind bars, it takes away from the labor force physically and monetarily.

## SECTION I: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

There are many differences between the U.S. prison system and other countries' prison systems, but there are key differences that stand out in comparison to the failing system in the U.S. The first difference is the lack of quality treatment and care in U.S. facilities. Individuals receive little to no quality medical and mental care while incarcerated, and if they do receive medical treatment, it is often difficult for them to continue receiving that treatment upon their release.<sup>2</sup> This lack of proper treatment extends into another difference, the way officers treat those who are incarcerated. Due to a lack of proper training and education, officers in the U.S. are seen as disrespectful and violent towards those in prison. Incarcerated individuals endure more hardship in the U.S. as they receive longer sentence lengths than countries abroad.

The incarcerated population is stripped of almost all their rights. Those incarcerated have the right to be free from cruel treatment under the Eighth Amendment, the right to be free from sexual harassment, to take part in education, to complain about prison conditions, to have access the court, to have reasonable accommodations for disabilities, to receive medical and mental health care, and to be free of discrimination under the Fourteenth Amendment, as well as the right to basic First Amendment Rights.<sup>3</sup> Most importantly, "all prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dig-

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Puglisi, Joseph P. Calderon, and Emily A. Wang, "What Does Health Justice Look Like for People Returning from Incarceration?" *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*, September 2017, <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/what-does-health-justice-look-people-returning-incarceration/2017-09>

<sup>3</sup> HG Legal Resources, "Do Inmates Have Rights? If So, What Are They?" Accessed November 19, 2021, <https://www.hg.org/legal-articles/do-inmates-have-rights-if-so-what-are-they-31517>

nity and value as human beings.”<sup>4</sup> These are basic principles that all human beings should be treated with and prisons come close to crossing the line of discarding these rights. Emily Widra, a journalist at Prison Policy Initiative, reports of the violence that occurs behind bars in her article, “No Escape: The Trauma of Witnessing Violence in Prison.”<sup>5</sup> In 2004, 23 percent of the incarcerated population were intentionally injured by staff or other incarcerated individuals.<sup>6</sup> Over a six-month period in 2005, 21 percent of incarcerated men were assaulted by staff. In 2015, there were 16,940 reports of sexual violence of incarcerated individuals by staff and other incarcerated individuals. In 2016, 95 individuals in state and federal prisons were murdered. Widra’s statistics provide a numerical representation of the stories behind bars that are often hushed. These statistics most likely are not the full picture. Often, victims fear coming forward, especially when they are afraid of correctional officers who are inflicting such violence. Alongside violence, there have been reports of individuals not receiving proper medical or mental treatment.

Keri Blakinger, journalist in the Marshall Project, expresses the difficulties of seeking medical treatment inside prison. Blakinger writes that medical treatment was often refused due to fear of physicians providing treatment,<sup>7</sup> as physicians hired for correctional facilities often work with restricted or suspended licenses. An investigation by BuzzFeed News found that 10 of 12 doctors working in Louisiana prisons had a history of license restrictions or suspensions.<sup>8</sup>

The nonprofit National Commission on Correctional Health Care has urged since 1999 that jail and prison medical staff members have the same credentials as those who work outside, in settings like hospitals. But states often allow medical staffers in correctional facilities to work under licenses that are restricted because of past disciplinary issues.<sup>9</sup>

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) states that around two in five people who are incarcerated have a history of mental illnesses. This is reported to be two times greater than the adult population with a men-

4 United Nations, “Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners,” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Accessed December 4, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/basicprinciplestreatmentofprisoners.aspx>

5 Emily Widra, “No Escape: The Trauma of Witnessing Violence in Prison,” Prison Policy Initiative, December 2, 2020, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/12/02/witnessing-prison-violence/>

6 Ibid

7 Keri Blakinger, “Prisons Have a Health Care Issue—And It Starts at the Top, Critics Say,” The Marshall Project, July 1, 2021, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2021/07/01/prisons-have-a-health-care-issue-and-it-starts-at-the-top-critics-say>

8 Addy Baird, “Louisiana Bars Problem Doctors From Practicing Medicine In Most Hospitals. So They Treat Incarcerated People Instead,” BuzzFeed News, May 10, 2012, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/addybaird/louisiana-prison-doctors-licenses-suspended>

9 Keri Blakinger, “Prisons Have a Health Care Issue—And It Starts at the Top, Critics Say,”

tal illness outside of prison.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the NAMI goes on to state that around 63 percent of individuals incarcerated who have a history of a mental illness do not receive treatment while incarcerated. Over 50 percent who were medicated for mental health conditions prior to being incarcerated stopped receiving medication while incarcerated. The harsh conditions in the U.S. extend beyond a lack of proper medical and mental treatment.

To understand why the U.S.' system is seen as harsh and neglecting, one must look at the approaches in other countries to learn that prisons do not have to be cruel to rehabilitate. While the U.S. prisons are overcrowded, locking people in 8 foot by 10 foot cells, prisons in Norway resemble a dorm room. In the U.S., everyone wears a jumpsuit and spends most of the day in their cell or the common area, while in Norway, a day in prison models a day in society; during the day, individuals will either attend work, class, or both. Their facility is set up like a college campus where they go from their living quarters to a work building or school building. Meanwhile, in the U.S., the entire prison facility is one building that may or may not have areas where individuals go to work or class. Although work and class are accomplished in both facilities, having multiple smaller buildings resembling the idea of a society and community is vital in helping individuals transition back into society after their release.<sup>11</sup> This approach is not unique to Norway, many prisons around the world are transforming their facilities into a mock version of life to increase normality.

Facilities in Germany allow for the mothering of children up to the age of three. Allowing this helps establish a paramount bond between mother and child. Prisons abroad also allow the opportunity for individuals to request to return home on weekends. The thought behind allowing individuals to go home on the weekends is so they can strengthen the bond with their family, as well as ensure they have a support system on the outside—a major problem seen in the U.S. as individuals are released.<sup>12</sup> Approximately, only one percent of those incarcerated who leave do not return. When asked why this percentage was so low, a few individuals responded it was because they want to maintain the ability to request to see their families.<sup>13</sup> Although abnormal for the U.S., evidence shows that allowing the incarcerated to visit their families provides more good than harm.

10 NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness, "Mental Health Treatment While Incarcerated," Accessed December 6, 2021, <https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities/Improving-Health/Mental-Health-Treatment-While-Incarcerated>

11 Megan A. Cox, "Interview with Tom," November 1, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RehgLDxp-mZs>

12 TReND Wyoming, "The 4 Biggest Challenges Facing Those Newly Released from Prison," n.d., <https://www.trendwyoming.org/articles/biggest-challenges-after-prison-release/>

13 Ram Subramanian and Alison Shames, "Sentencing and Prison Practices in Germany and the Netherlands." *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 27, no. 1, October 1, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1525/fsr.2014.27.1.33>

Data shows that rights do not need to be stripped away to rehabilitate. Experiments, such as the infamous Stanford Prison Experiment, have shown that stripping one's rights leads to officers having a higher sense of power which can be directed into the harsh treatment towards incarcerated individuals.<sup>14</sup> The problem extends further than "bad officers." In the U.S., officers are not trained for a long period of time and in a superior position to those incarcerated, compared to Norway where officers receive extensive training and develop personal relationships with those who are incarcerated. In the U.S., officers could be trained from as little as three weeks to as long as 20 weeks. During this training, the main ideas they learn are riot control, use of force, defensive tactics, and communication skills.<sup>15</sup> In other countries, officers will spend up to two years training, trained not only as correctional officers but they also receive training of mental health, cultural awareness, understanding of religion, foreign incarcerated persons, and radicalism.<sup>16</sup> During an interview with Tom Eberhardt, the senior director advisor and senior director of the Norwegian Correctional Facility,<sup>17</sup> he explains the specific types of training in Norway that provide their officers with the skills to build meaningful relationships. Their officers receive training in criminal justice as well as psychology, counseling, and relationship building. The relationships that correctional officers have with prisoners in Norway is a relationship that encompasses a sense of membership. Eberhardt described that when those who are incarcerated are treated as human beings and can have a friendly relationship with officers, not only are they treated better by the officers, the officers are treated better by them. To see how impactful relationship building is and how it can change the dynamic between officers and those incarcerated, it is necessary to look at the officers and staff in the U.S. who sustain these types of healthy and positive relationships.

Patricia McCoy once worked as a counselor in a U.S. prison and describes the nature of how having a friendly relationship with her clients potentially could have saved her life. McCoy was loved by her clients because she saw them for who they were—people. The appreciation of McCoy came to life when one of her clients told her that a plan had been formed to take over the prison but, amidst the chaos, they were going to protect her because they appreciated how she treated them. Thankfully, this chaotic takeover never

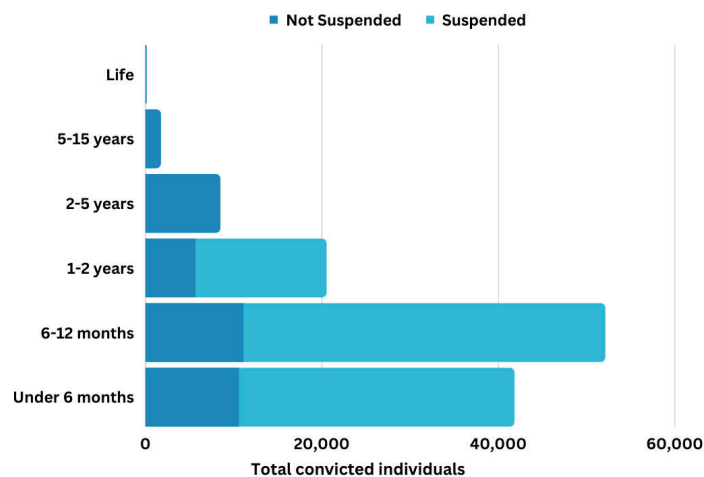
14 Stanford Prison Experiment, "Stanford Prison Experiment: A Simulation Study on the Psychology of Imprisonment," Accessed December 7, 2021, <https://www.prisonexp.org>

15 Correctional Officer Academy, "What to Expect from Correctional Officer Academy Training," June 28, 2013, <https://www.correctionalofficeredu.org/correctional-officer-academy>

16 European Commission, "Basic Training for Correctional Officers," 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/collection-inspiring-practices/ran-practices/basic-training-correctional-officers\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/collection-inspiring-practices/ran-practices/basic-training-correctional-officers_en)

17 Megan A. Cox, "Interview with Tom," November 1, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RehgLDxp-mZs>

happened, but it provides insight into how treating each other with respect can lead to stronger relationships. With dedicated training and processes, the U.S. can improve the relationships shared between their staff and those incarcerated. Besides the differences in conditions and training of officers, there is one last key difference that shows the U.S. prison system is stuck in the 1970s. Compared to other countries, the U.S. sentences at greater lengths and relies less on other resources of rehabilitation such as fines, community service, or rehabilitation centers. In the U.S., the average length of time spent in state prisons is over 2 years,<sup>18</sup> with the median being around 1 year. The average length of time spent in prison in the Western Europe region is a little more than 6 months.<sup>19</sup> The sentencing in Germany (Figure 1) is seen as far more humane because their approach is to fine or put as many individuals on probation as possible as an alternative to imprisonment. Any sentence that is given of one year or less in Germany automatically turns into probation. 92 percent of prison sentences are less than two years, and 75 percent of those are served outside of prison walls.<sup>20</sup>



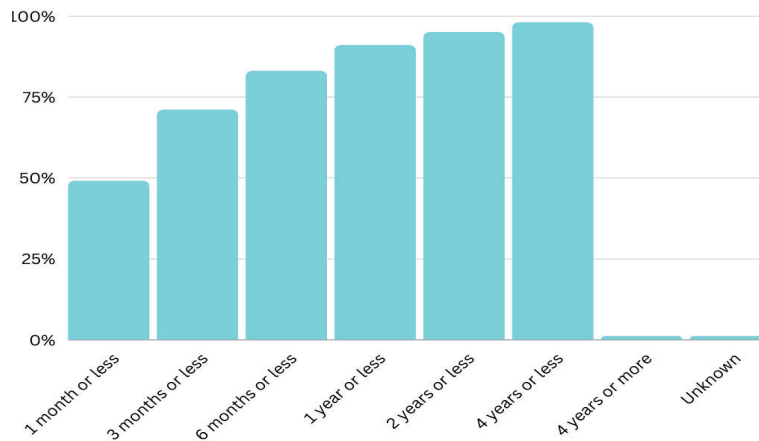
**Figure 1.** German Sentence Lengths. Subramanian, Ram, and Alison Shames. "Sentencing and Prison Practices in Germany and the Netherlands." *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 27, no. 1 (October 1, 2014): 33–45. <https://doi.org/10.1525/fsr.2014.27.1.33>.

In the Netherlands, 91 percent of sentences are less than 1 year (Figure 2). This number increases by only four percent when looking at those serv-

18 Danielle Kaebler and BJS Statistician, "Time Served in State Prison, 2016," Bureau of Justice Statistics, November 2018, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/time-served-state-prison-2016>

19 Gordon B. Dahl and Magne Mogstad, "The Benefits of Rehabilitative Incarceration," National Bureau of Economic Research, March 2020, <https://www.nber.org/reporter/2020number1/benefits-rehabilitative-incarceration>

20 Ibid



**Figure 2.** Dutch Sentence Lengths. Subramanian, Ram, and Alison Shames. "Sentencing and Prison Practices in Germany and the Netherlands." *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 27, no. 1 (October 1, 2014): 33–45. <https://doi.org/10.1525/fsr.2014.27.1.33>.

ing less than 2 years. In the U.S., the Bureau of Justice reports that only 65 percent of individuals were sentenced to less than two years in prison in 2016.<sup>21</sup> To compare closer to numbers seen in Germany and the Netherlands, 87 percent of U.S. incarcerated individuals were sentenced to less than five years and 96 percent were sentenced to less than ten years. It is important to note that not all of the sentence time was served. Originally, in Bill Clinton's Crime Bill of 1994, at least 85 percent of a sentence length had to be served by an individual. Many states found flaws in that policy and refrained from adopting it.<sup>22</sup>

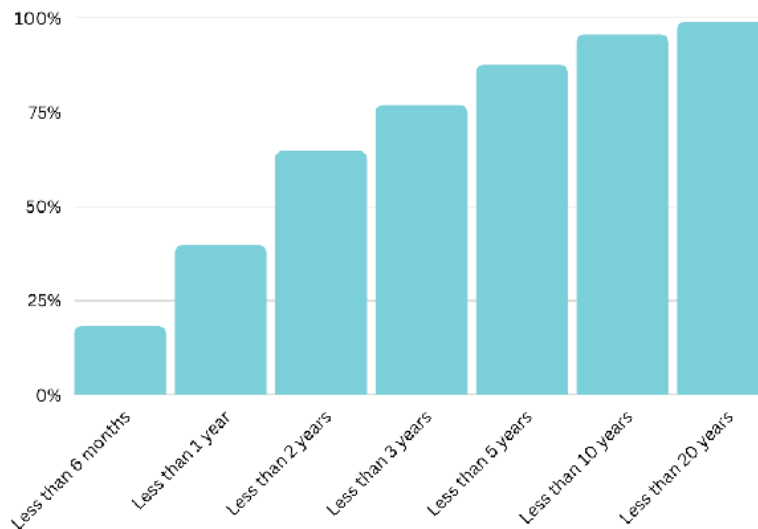
Findings from the Bureau of Justice show the average sentence length is 6 years (Figure 3). On average, 46 percent of those sentence lengths were served. This means that most incarcerated individuals serve roughly 3 years in state facilities. The U.S. is incarcerating more individuals with greater sentence lengths than other countries yet fail to see a reduction in crime.

Because of the conditions in the U.S. prison system, such as overcrowding and lack of resources for health and mental health, it has been reported that for every year spent in prison, two years are lost from an individual's life expectancy.<sup>23</sup> This means that in the U.S., the number of average years served equals almost 6 years lost from a person's life, not to mention the near three years that they lost while incarcerated. These numbers only account for the

21 Kaeble, "Time Served in State Prison, 2016."

22 Congress.gov, "STATUTE-108-Pg1796.Pdf," Accessed December 18, 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/103/statute/STATUTE-108/STATUTE-108-Pg1796.pdf>

23 Emily Widra, "Incarceration Shortens Life Expectancy," Prison Policy Initiative, June 26, 2017, [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2017/06/26/life\\_expectancy/](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2017/06/26/life_expectancy/)



**Figure 3.** U.S. Sentence Length. Kaeble, Danielle. “Time Served in State Prison, 2016,” 2016, 7.

first offense, and 76.6 percent of released individuals are rearrested within five years.<sup>24</sup> When accounting for the probability of re-offending, the average amount of years lost from these individuals’ lives are approximately 9 years. Again considering the years lost while incarcerated, that number shifts to about 13 years. 13 years of life is expected to be lost on the average incarcerated person—most commonly being convicted of property or non-violent crimes. The length of sentences, the conditions of incarceration, and the high recidivism rate has had such an impact that the average life expectancy for all people living in the U.S. has dropped by almost two years.<sup>25</sup>

The most important question that can be asked, and which will continue to be asked throughout this paper, is what can be learned? Even under these conditions, implementation of new approaches can take place which will lead to an improvement of conditions in prisons. Sentences can be shorter and still be effective, normalization and maintaining rights are needed so that there is not as big of a shock when re-entering society, and more training is needed for U.S. correctional officers to ensure respect is exchanged. Although these are ways that the U.S. can make changes in their system, there are programs in the U.S. that have been effective in reducing the recidivism rate.

<sup>24</sup> Liz Benecchi, “Recidivism Imprisons American Progress,” Harvard Political Review, August 8, 2021, <https://harvardpolitics.com/recidivism-american-progress/>

<sup>25</sup> Widra, “Incarceration Shortens Life Expectancy.”

## Section II: Recidivism and Education

One of the opinions given in support of mass incarceration, specifically why the U.S. has such a high rate compared to other countries, is that the U.S. has one of the highest crime rates. This claim is far from being supported by any evidence. When looking at data per capita between countries, the United States has the 28th highest per capita crime with a rate of 4.95 in 2018,<sup>26</sup> but led incarceration rates at 639 per 100,000 persons in 2021. The country that follows second for incarceration rates is El Salvador with a rate of 562 per 100,000 persons in 2021, but led the world's crime rates in 2018 at a rate of 52.02 crimes per capita—nearly 10 times the rate of the U.S.

Looking at statistics of the rate of crime from 1990–2020 in the United States, data shows that the rate of crimes has decreased as the rate of incarceration has increased. It is important to note that evidence has found no strong correlation between the two, rather, this evidence should be seen as incarceration being a possible reduction in crime but not a deterrent of crime. This is an important distinction to make. It is true that there is less crime reported because more criminals are incarcerated for a longer period, however, because recidivism rates in the United States are so high, crime rates may have decreased from year to year, but crime was not deterred because of the threat of prison. In a study conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice, incarceration has a diminishing marginal impact on crime.<sup>27</sup> This means that for each increase in the incarceration rate, the correlation to crime rate decreasing continues to decrease. Further research shows that incarceration has a positive correlation on property crimes, meaning that incarcerating individuals for property crime does not decrease the rate of property crime. Property crimes make up roughly 14 percent of the adult incarcerated population and 22 percent of the youth incarcerated population.<sup>28</sup>

Studies have found that the reduction in crime rates can be found, not from incarceration, but from an increase in high school and college graduation rates, an increase in consumer confidence, an increase in law enforcement personnel, an increase in the aging population, and changes in policing strategies.<sup>29</sup> This leads people to consider an alternative idea in decreasing crime that has long existed—crime prevention.

Up until the 1992 amendment to the Higher Education Act and the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement bill enacted by President Clin-

26 Macrotrends, "Crime Rate & Statistics by Country," Accessed November 19, 2021, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/ranking/crime-rate-statistics>

27 Don Stemen, "The Prison Paradox: More Incarceration Will Not Make Us Safer," Vera Institute of Justice, July 2017, [https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/for-the-record-prison-paradox\\_02.pdf](https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/for-the-record-prison-paradox_02.pdf)

28 Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner. "Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2020." Prison Policy Initiative, March 24, 2020, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2020.html>

29 Stemen, "The Prison Paradox: More Incarceration Will Not Make Us Safer."



ton, prisoners were offered access to college programs through the aid of the Pell Grant.<sup>30</sup> The amendment to the 1992 Higher Education Act denied individuals serving life sentences with parole or those sentenced to death access to education. The 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement bill denied access to anyone incarcerated from receiving the Pell Grant.<sup>31</sup> From Prison Policy's estimates, in the early 1990s "it is estimated that 772 programs were operating in 1,287 correctional facilities across the nation."<sup>32</sup> Then, stated by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), "by 1997[...]it is estimated that only 8 college-in-prison programs existed in the United States."<sup>33</sup> Offering post-secondary education is seen to lower the recidivism rate by approximately 43 percent.<sup>34</sup> Interested in one organization's approach after watching the Netflix documentary *College Behind Bars*, Ms. Jessica Neptune, one of the cofounders of the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI), offered her insight into the role of post-secondary education in the prison system.

During an interview with Neptune, it was learned that post-secondary education programs offer more benefits than just a college degree.<sup>35</sup> Incarcerated individuals often do not have anything to keep their minds busy while in prison. There may be a television or a few books and some recreation time, but that only holds attention for a limited amount of time, yet U.S. prisons expect individuals to spend their time on nothing for nearly three years while incarcerated. Keeping individuals busy through an education program not only provides knowledge, but also an outlet to spend their focus and energy on.

Getting a degree does not always have to do with learning information, but rather learning how to understand information and how to approach different issues. In the same way, Neptune discussed how recently released individuals were more prepared for challenges they were to face outside of prison because they had the same critical thinking skills that traditional college students learn. After release, individuals face many problems, such as transportation, housing, and finding a job, all while typically having to report to a parole officer. In the U.S., trying to find a car, rent a home, and get a job is tough enough after incarceration due to the stigma of having been incarcerated, but when you factor in the visits these individuals must make to

30 Wendy Sawyer, "Since You Asked: How Did the 1994 Crime Bill Affect Prison College Programs?" Prison Policy Initiative, August 22, 2019, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/08/22/college-in-prison/>

31 Congress.gov, "STATUTE-108-Pg1796.Pdf"

32 Sawyer, "Since You Asked."

33 Betsy Pearl, "Ending the War on Drugs: By the Numbers," Center for American Progress, June 27, 2018, <https://americanprogress.org/article/ending-war-drugs-numbers/>

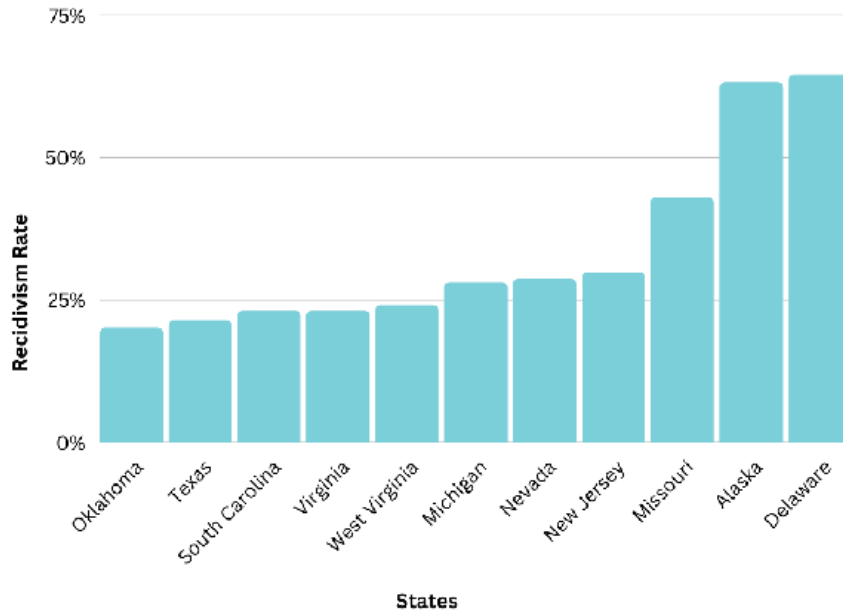
34 Mia Bird and Amy Lerman, "Expanding education, reducing recidivism," Public Policy Institute of California, 2015, <https://www.ppic.org/blog/expanding-education-reducing-recidivism>

35 Megan A. Cox, "Interview with Jessica Neptune," November 1, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guL-Vc6C1yQ>

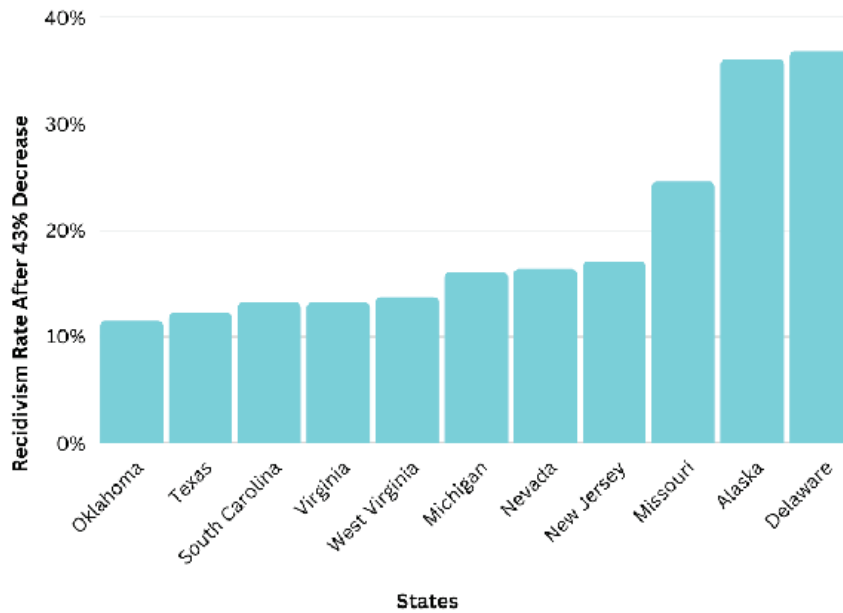
their parole officer, it complicates the situation even further. The current system for those recently released is set up to fail them. Other issues have been reported of individuals having issues getting prescriptions filled and finding substance abuse or mental health treatments that are close and affordable. By going through a post-secondary education program while incarcerated, individuals receive an increased capability to navigate societal systems upon their release. Education programs also provide time management skills. Many people struggle with time management after release, specifically, issues juggling a job, making it to their parole meetings, and making it to treatment programs they may need to attend. With time management skills, people can sustain themselves through different problems they face upon release and they can use these skills to navigate being flexible in the work environment and to find resources.

One of the reasons that BPI is such a unique program is that, although the program takes place in prisons, staff work to keep the school separate by creating physical classrooms in the prison that would mimic a school. The separation of the program from the prison humanizes BPI's students and reminds them that incarceration is not their identity. In the program, BPI offers a track for an Associate's Degree and then a Bachelor's Degree. They offer a wide variety of classes taught by some of the top professors in the U.S. To make BPI's program even more unique, the classes they offer follow the interest of their students. Neptune told how one year there was an extreme interest in studying German Literature after reading DuBois in an English translation rather than in a German translation, leading to a request to read in the original translation. The next cohort of students heard about that and requested a class to study Mandarin. BPI offers classes that are atypically seen in most incarcerated college programs such as philosophy and computer programming. BPI is a leader in their approach to reforming the prison system and helping incarcerated individuals by providing post-secondary education. BPI does not stop inside the prison, they also have initiatives in low socioeconomic areas to provide education to individuals on the road to incarceration, due to the community they live in and decreased income. Neptune said that they rarely see any of their students reoffend and see their students making progress in their communities by taking a stance for reform to help individuals like their past selves. The true success of a program is often seen in the response of the attendees after completing the program and it is clearly seen from BPI's approach that their organization has helped thousands of incarcerated individuals and people on the road to possible incarceration.

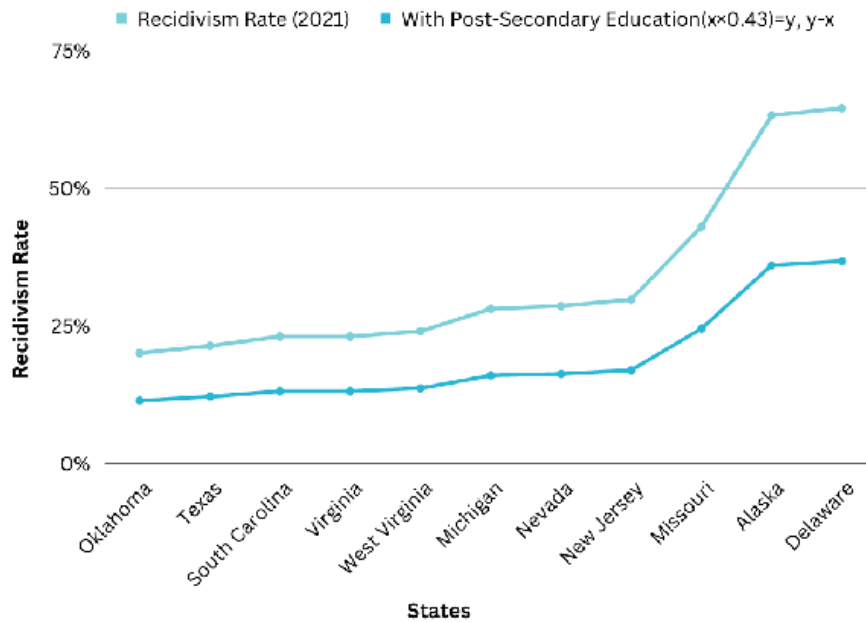
Figures 4, 5, and 6 demonstrate the reduction in recidivism by including post-secondary education in prisons. Using the data of a 43 percent decrease



**Figure 4.** Recidivism Rates by State (2021). World Population Review. “Recidivism rates by state.” <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/recidivism-rates-by-state>



**Figure 5.** Recidivism Rate with Post-Secondary Education ( $X \times 0.43 = y$ ,  $y - x$ ). Northwestern University. “Benefits of Prison Education,” *Northwestern Prison Education Program* (blog), n.d., <https://sites.northwestern.edu/npep/benefits-of-prison-education/>



**Figure 6.** Approximate Recidivism with and without Post-Secondary Education. Northwestern University. “Benefits of Prison Education,” *Northwestern Prison Education Program* (blog), n.d., <https://sites.northwestern.edu/npep/benefits-of-prison-education/>

that is typically seen in the recidivism rate with post-secondary education, calculations have been made as to what the approximate recidivism rates would look like in a few states with some of the highest and lowest recidivism in the U.S.<sup>36</sup> The current recidivism rate data comes from the states’ reported data for 2021.

Calculations with a decrease in recidivism rate based on the increase in opportunities for post-secondary education are not exact, these numbers look solely at what would happen if all who were incarcerated were given the chance the take part in education, not considering funding or resources. Nonetheless, the states that were examined begin from those with the lowest recidivism rates: Oklahoma, Texas, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Michigan, Nevada, and New Jersey, to the state with a mid-range recidivism rate: Missouri, and then finally the two states with the highest recidivism rates: Alaska and Delaware. These numbers represent a predictive reduction in the recidivism rate, if post-secondary education was offered in all prison facilities.

The U.S. is already heading in this direction with the development and expansion of Second Chance Pell Grants. Second Chance Pell Grants were

36 Bird and Lerman, “Expanding Education, Reducing Recidivism.”

established in 2015 as an experiment under the Obama administration.

It was recently announced by the U.S. Department of Education that Second Chance Pell Grants would expand for the 2022–2023 award years which allows the participation of nearly 70 more colleges.<sup>37</sup> After seeing success from the Obama administration’s experiment program, lawmakers officially reversed the decision of Clinton’s Crime Bill of 1994 to allow access to Pell Grants for students who are incarcerated, as long as the programs they are enrolled in are approved by their states’ correctional department.

Even though the correlation between a reduction in recidivism rate and an increase in post-secondary education is strong, there are still individuals who do not believe it is right to allow these opportunities to the incarcerated population. One issue seen in the documentary *College Behind Bars* is that those incarcerated are being offered the chance of an education at a cost of near nothing while many correctional officers have never received an education, nor had an opportunity to receive the Pell Grant to receive an education. Likewise, there are many individuals living in poverty who do not have the opportunity for education. Due to these concerns, an important question arises as to who should have the right to education. Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1984, education is a right that should be given to everyone.<sup>38</sup> While there needs to be an increased focus on education in the prison system, there also needs to be an increased focus on expanding the opportunity for education to everyone.

This can be done in a few different ways that are already being seen. For starters, adopting longer correctional officer training models, like in countries abroad, would provide officers the opportunity for better education, as well as to receive similar critical thinking and time management skills by studying areas they are interested in. Following BPI’s approach to education, other education organizations can begin to offer, or expand, funding and availability of education to those who live in impoverished areas or do not have the access to resources such as childcare that would allow them to have the opportunity of greater education. To respond to the opponents of education for the incarcerated population, it is vital to remember that education is a basic human right that needs to be extended to everyone.

The approach that organizations have taken to provide education to incarcerated persons and those of a lower socioeconomic dynamic is a foundational step in reducing the recidivism rate and preventing individuals from

37 United States Department of Education, “U.S. Department of Education Announces It Will Expand the Second Chance Pell Experiment for the 2022–2023 Award Year,” July 30, 2021, <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-it-will-expand-second-chance-pell-experiment-2022-2023-award-year>.

38 United Nations. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” Accessed December 18, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

being incarcerated. BPI's non-customary approach has proven successful because their students are seen as students and people—not just inmates. Providing education with the purpose of acknowledging that every human is deserving of a right to education reinforces the fact that incarceration does not make one any less human. This is the same approach that is seen in other countries and was discussed with Eberhardt—establishing a team-like relationship between incarcerated individuals and officers. While discussing with Neptune about her students, one thing that stuck out was how she only referred to them as students. Hearing her humanize her students, even in a small way such as a name, was extremely humbling. An increase in the use of the Second Chance Pell Grant will be impactful towards a lower recidivism rate in the U.S. and extending the opportunity for education to those who have not had the opportunity to receive education will be even more effective at rehabilitation, deterring individuals who are on the path of incarceration, and reducing the recidivism rate.

### Section III: Prison System and the Economic Impact

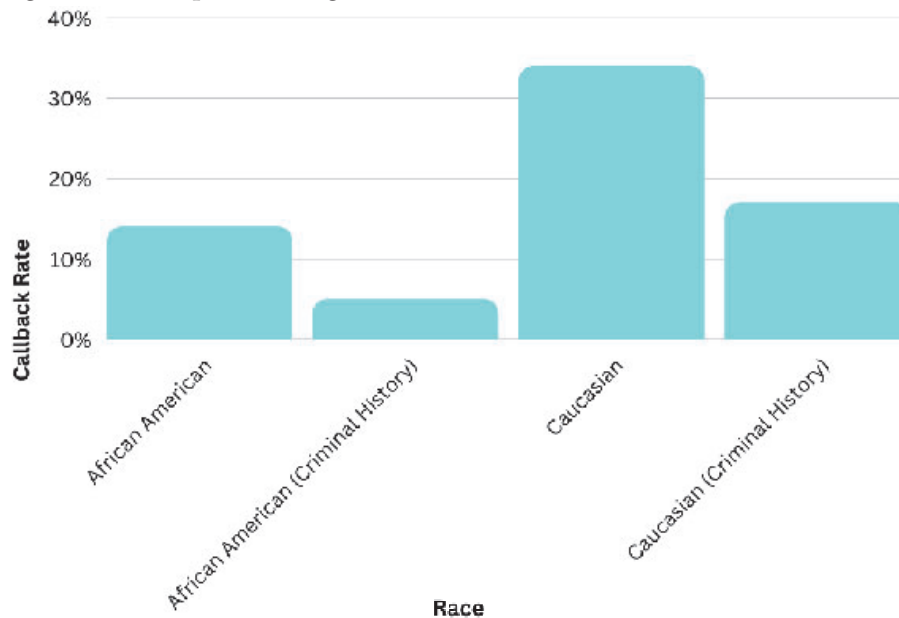
In a country that has a high GDP and economic stability, one of the last things that is typically thought about is the negative impact of a failing system on a growing economy. The U.S. prison system has adversely impacted economic activity in the U.S. and has caused an increased spending of taxpayers' money that could be used in other areas. The current system has taken away from products being made in the U.S. and members of the labor force and has placed a burden that all future generations will have to face if change does not occur.

Approximately two million people are removed from the labor force each year due to being incarcerated.<sup>39</sup> This loss of work force leads to a loss of between \$57–65 billion in output each year and an approximate \$2 million loss in output every time that a juvenile makes a career out of being a criminal.<sup>40</sup> Because the incarcerated population is ostracized in the U.S. it only takes one time in prison to begin the revolving door of time in prison. In 2011, the PEW Center of States shared a document displaying the probability of receiving a call back for a job in the U.S. comparing Caucasian and African American individuals with and without a criminal background. A Caucasian individual has a 17 percent probability of receiving a callback while an

39 John Schmitt and Jori Kandra, "The Carceral State and the Labor Market," Economic Policy Institute, April 29, 2021, <https://www.epi.org/blog/the-carceral-state-and-the-labor-market/>

40 Eunice Hernandez, "The Negative Effects on the Economy Caused by Mass Incarceration," *North Texas Daily* (blog), February 24, 2020, <https://www.ntdaily.com/the-negative-effects-on-the-economy-caused-by-mass-incarceration/>

African American individual has a five percent probability.<sup>41</sup> This is compared to the Caucasian callback probability with no criminal background at 34 percent and to the African American callback probability with no criminal background at 14 percent (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Callback Rates based on Race. The Pew Center on the States, “State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America’s Prisons,” (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, April 2011).

Besides the most notable correlation—criminal and racial injustices—there are more factors that contribute to the reduction in callback rates that are seen in Figure 7. In prison, it is obviously harder for individuals to make connections on the outside. The U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics finds that around 70 percent of jobs are filled based on networking.<sup>42</sup> While individuals are in prison, especially with the high sentencing that the U.S. gives, the people that they will be networking with are others who are incarcerated.

Even if networking were not the leading factor of getting a job, there are currently more than 19,000 local, state, and federal laws that limit employment opportunities for those with a criminal background. If a previously incarcerated individual is now following the right steps, not only is the prison system against them, the economy is set up to fail them. As of November 1, 2021, The Brennan Center for Justice reported that nearly 60 percent of pre-

<sup>41</sup> The Pew Center on the States, “State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America’s Prisons,” (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, April 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Paige Harden, “How to Land a Job by Networking,” The Washington Post Jobs, May 23, 2016, <https://jobs.washingtonpost.com/article/how-to-land-a-job-by-networking/>

viously incarcerated people are unemployed.<sup>43</sup> By increasing opportunities for jobs in prisons, the U.S. would not only be increasing the skills and readiness that one faces upon release, but they would also save money by increasing the workforce.

Taxpayers currently spend nearly \$4.6 billion on prisons each year.<sup>44</sup> This number can be reduced if the recidivism and incarceration rates drop by an increase in the number of jobs for available for people to work while incarcerated. Individuals with jobs in prison are found to be 24 percent more likely to get a full-time job after being released and typically earn more money compared to individuals who do not work during their time in prison as reported by Dr. Morgan Reynolds, the former director of the Criminal Justice Center at the National Center for Policy Analysis in Dallas, Texas, and a retired professor of economics at Texas A&M University.<sup>45</sup> Not only does working in prison increase the likelihood of being employed after release, it also adds to the economy. To be able to have jobs, prisons must purchase raw materials. Purchasing raw materials and having the incarcerated population make products that can be sold will put money into the economy. There are arguments that prison labor takes away jobs from the general population since incarcerated persons often work for a few cents an hour, but Dr. Reynolds states in his analysis that, although prison labor costs less, productivity is far lower than the average person, so the decreased payment makes up for the decreased productivity. Decreasing the amount taxpayer dollars going towards prisons can be done by increasing the prison work force because it adds money to the economy.

Due to the stigma that the incarcerated population receives, many Americans have a bad notion about giving any of their money to prisons. Even if taxpayer dollars could be reduced with an increase of the prison labor work force, it does not necessarily mean that it is the best idea. If the prison work force continues to increase but the amount of taxpayer dollars spent decrease prisons will be able to use that money to better their facility. Bettering a prison facility does not necessarily mean the building itself, but helping cover the costs of professors coming in to teach to incarcerated individuals or to cover the cost of a better re-entry program or even to cover the cost of starting a garden. There are many ways that prisons can spend taxpayers' money to better benefit and improve the system. They can also shuffle the expenditure

43 Julia Bowling, "Mass Incarceration Gets Attention as an Economic Issue (Finally)," Brennan Center for Justice, September 13, 2013, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/mass-incarceration-gets-attention-economic-issue-finally>

44 Andrew Bushnell, "Skewed Priorities - Comparing the Growth Of Prison Spending With Police Spending," Institute of Public Affairs, November 19, 2019, <https://ipa.org.au/publications-ipa/research-papers/skewed-priorities-comparing-the-growth-of-prison-spending-with-police-spending>

45 Morgan O. Reynolds, "The Economic Impact of Prison Labor," National Center for Policy Analysis, November 17, 1997, <https://www.ncpathinktank.org/pub/ba245>



of money to support the economy and lower the recidivism rate.

As previously mentioned, one thing that sets the U.S. prison system apart from other countries is the way the U.S. has treated its drug crisis. Rather than treating the drug crisis as a National Health Crisis, the U.S. criminalizes drug users, and in 2015 the U.S. spent nearly \$3.3 billion incarcerating those with drug-related charges.<sup>46</sup> Besides having an economic impact, there is a moral issue with criminalizing those with drug-related charges. Instead of offering rehabilitative services to those with drug issues the U.S. locks up individuals, which can exacerbate their problems and increase the chance of them continuing their drug usage without proper treatment. A high incarceration of those with drug-related charges started with the Nixon Administration as he declared drug abuse to be “public enemy number one.”<sup>47</sup> The war on drugs continued through the Reagan, Clinton, and Bush Administrations. President Reagan signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act in 1986 which increased prison penalties for those with drug charges and established mandatory minimum sentencing for certain drug offenses.<sup>48</sup> The Clinton Administration signed into law the 1994 Crime Bill which aggressively increased incarceration. Part of his law established longer sentencing lengths for those convicted of drug crimes, as well as establishing that 85 percent of all sentences must be served in prison—including sentences given to youth.<sup>49</sup> It is becoming more apparent that the war on drugs was not handled in a proper way, but its effects become more glaring when considering its economic impact.

Alex Muresianu, a young voice advocate, shares his research on the effects of the economy given the opioid crisis by saying that, “opioid addiction has had a large negative impact on labor force participation, and the estimated economic cost of the opioid crises is almost \$80 billion.”<sup>50</sup> Alex reports that decriminalizing drugs would reduce state spending by \$29.4 billion and federal spending by \$18.5 billion (it is not reported whether this amount accounts for the money that would be spent to rehabilitate in a way that treats inappropriate drug usage as a health issue). Treating individuals properly can have a positive effect on winning the war on drugs by minimizing the number of people incarcerated. Extensive prison sentences have placed burdens on those in and outside the prison walls. One in twenty-eight children have

46 Pearl, “Ending the War on Drugs.”

47 Richard Nixon, “Remarks About an Intensified Program for Drug Abuse Prevention and Control,” June 17, 1971, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-about-intensified-program-for-drug-abuse-prevention-and-control>

48 History.com Editors, “Just Say No,” History, August 21, 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/1980s/just-say-no>

49 Congress.gov, “STATUTE-108-Pg1796.Pdf.”

50 Alex Muresianu, “Criminal Justice Reform Is Also Good Economics,” Foundation for Economic Education, August 16, 2018, <https://fee.org/articles/criminal-justice-reform-is-also-good-economics/>

at least one parent in prison in the U.S.<sup>51</sup> and having a parent incarcerated doubles a child’s chance to experience homelessness and poverty. The current rate that children experience homelessness on average is one in forty-five children.<sup>52</sup> This means that 0.16 percent of children with a parent incarcerated will experience homelessness. Although it seems like a small amount of the population, with a youth population of roughly 73 million, 0.16 percent of the youth population equals nearly 118,506 children.<sup>53</sup> If the number of parents incarcerated were reduced by 50 percent, there would be a 3.4 percent reduction in the total number of children who will experience poverty and homelessness (Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 1\*: Percentage of Homeless and impoverished children with at least one incarcerated parent.**

	Numerical Value (values rounded):	Equal:
$P(IP) \times P(EHP) \times (\text{Youth Pop.})$	$(0.0357) \times (0.045) \times (73,000,000)$	116,800
$P(1-IP) \times P(EHP NIP) \times (\text{Youth Pop.})$	$(0.9643) \times (0.022) \times (73,000,000)$	1,622,222
A2/A3	116,800/1,548,666	0.07

**Table 2\*: Percentage of Homeless and impoverished children with at least one incarcerated parent, reduced by 50 percent.**

	Numerical Value (values rounded):	Equal:
$[P(IP^0) \times 0.5] \times P(EHP) \times (\text{Youth Pop.})$	$[(0.0357) \times (0.5)] \times (0.044) \times (73,000,000)$	58,400
$P[1 - (IP^0) \times 0.5] \times P(EHP NIP) \times (\text{Youth Pop.})$	$[1 - (0.0357) \times (0.5)] \times (0.022) \times (73,000,000)$	1,563,822
A7/A8	58,400/1,577,332	0.036

*\*IP is defined as incarcerated parents; EHP is defined as experiencing homelessness/poverty; NIP is defined as no incarcerated parent*

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, around 50 percent of youth in prison have experienced homelessness.<sup>54</sup> Roughly 746,222 homeless children will end up incarcerated at some time in their life, 119,396 of those children having at least one parent incarcerated.

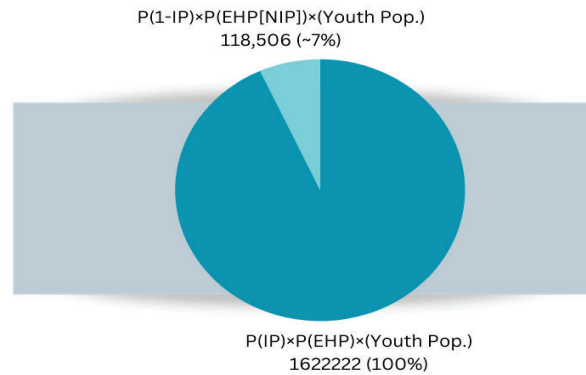
51 Bowling, “Mass Incarceration Gets Attention as an Economic Issue (Finally)”

52 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, “Homeless Experiences of Parents Have a Lasting Impact on Children,” 2020.

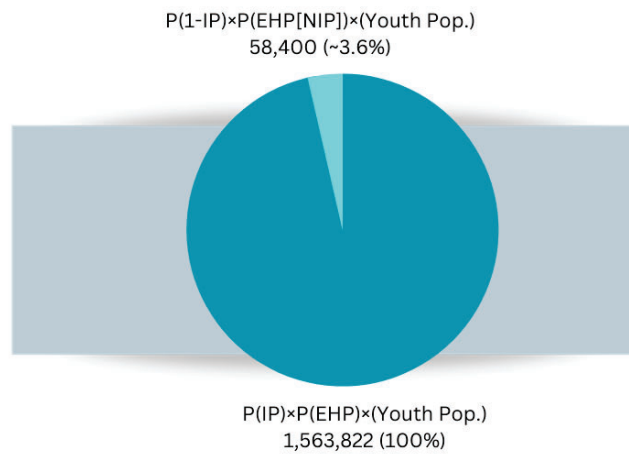
53 Ben Dawson, “The State of America’s Children 2021 - Child Population.” Children’s Defense Fund, 2021, <https://www.childrensdefense.org/state-of-americas-children/soac-2021-child-population/>

54 National Conference of State Legislatures, “Youth Homelessness Overview,” 2021, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/homeless-and-runaway-youth.aspx>

Although not all these children will find themselves in prison, they are at a much higher risk (Figures 8 and 9).



**Figure 8.** (Homeless/Impoverished Children) vs (Homeless/Impoverished Children with at least one incarcerated parent.). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Ad-



**Figure 9.** (Homeless/Impoverished Children) vs (Homeless/Impoverished Children with at least One Incarcerated Parent with a 50 percent reduction). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Homeless Experiences of Parents Have a Lasting Impact on Children.* (2020).

The final way that reforming prisons can help the economy stems from the devaluation that prison facilities put on the housing market. In areas with prisons, housing values are decreased between three to four percent.<sup>55</sup> This data would not be statistically significant if it were not for the fact that prisons continue to be built because of the issue of mass incarceration. Angela

<sup>55</sup> Janjala Chirakijja, "The Local Economic Impacts of Prisons," SSRN Electronic Journal, March 1, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3794967>

Davis in her book *Are Prisons Obsolete?* reports that “it had taken more than one hundred years to build the first nine California prisons. In less than a single decade, the number of California prisons doubles” even though there has been no significant reduction in crime.<sup>56</sup> Since 2018, there are a total of 35 prison facilities in California beyond their maximum capacity by 37 percent.<sup>57</sup> Mass incarceration is harmful for individuals both inside and outside the prison walls. The current prison system in the U.S. will continue to make the economy worse if action is not taken. The U.S. economic system is losing billions of dollars over a loss of output due to the large number of individuals incarcerated for an extreme amount of time. Incarcerated individuals are not taught proper skills to help them succeed after they are released, leading to a revolving door in the U.S. prison system. Children are losing their quality of life as they experience their parents incarceration, increasing their chances to end up homeless, impoverished, or imprisoned. The housing market is being devalued with the need to constantly build facilities to keep up with the increased criminalization. By not taking steps to reform its system, the U.S. prison system will continue to have negative effects on its incarcerated population and its country, leading to a decrease in the quality of life that Americans will face.

#### **Section IV: Implementation in the United States and Conclusion**

There has been a call to action to improve the conditions of the prison system and treatment of its staff and those incarcerated. Other countries have taken different approaches to improve their prisons, economy, and citizens. The U.S. can follow their footsteps by implementing changes to increase training for staff, education, and support programs for incarcerated individuals, and diminish the number of laws that restrict past offenders from living and working. In most countries, the training that an officer receives to work at a prison is years longer than the training that U.S. officers receive. In a Guidance Note on Prison Reform, that is supported by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the International Centre for Prison Studies writes about how human rights training should be included in every officer’s training.<sup>58</sup> Human rights training consists of courses that teach staff to respect the rights of others. It refrains from telling officers how they should be treating incarcerated individuals to emphasize that human rights training should be

56 Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, April 1, 2003), 97.

57 Joseph Hayes et al., “California’s Prison Population,” Public Policy Institute of California, July 2021, <https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-prison-population/>

58 King’s College London, “Prison staff and their training,” International Centre for Prison Studies, Accessed February 18, 2023, [https://www.prisonstudies.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/gn8\\_6.pdf](https://www.prisonstudies.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/gn8_6.pdf)

inclusive of all people. The writers acknowledge the difficulties in officers dealing with the stress of working in a prison and remaining fair in treatment, but provide quotes from leaders over the world, portraying the importance of mutual respect.

- “Improvement and respect, corrections is about putting human being first. Inmates’ human rights are respected, starting with living space and every effort is made to ensure inmates are treated with dignity.”<sup>59</sup>
- “The Jamahiriya society proscribes punishments which attack the dignity and the integrity of the human being...”<sup>60</sup>
- “Her Majesty’s prison service serves the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts. Our duty is to look after them with humanity and help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release.”<sup>61</sup>

For over twenty years in other countries, the importance of human rights and treating each other with respect has been a topic of discussion. When it comes to the types of training that is included for officers, it makes sense why human rights training has been a standard for decades. Yet in the U.S., human rights training is not mentioned in the Corrections Certification Program Handbook.<sup>62</sup> The closest mention to a standard of ethics in their handbook is the training from the American Counseling Association’s code of ethics. Although this is a start in ensuring the well-being of the incarcerated, it begs the question of why officers in the U.S. do not have an ethical training specific to their own occupation. Additionally, stories and news of U.S. prisons have shown that these ethical codes are not followed as close as they should. Incorporating human rights training is only the beginning for improving the training that officers in the U.S. receive, officers should receive constant training on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. This training could consist of many different things ranging from mental and physical fitness to approaching individuals of a different race or sex. The goal of constant training is to create a structure where officers are pushing themselves to grow in their personal and professional lives, which will better themselves and the individuals they are rehabilitating. Growth is always important, but it is crucial as an officer working in a high stress environment. Including training programs for officers allows for the opportunity to educate those who are incarcerated as well. It has been established that education for individuals who are incarcer-

59 Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea, *Corrections in Korea 2004*, 2004, p.22.

60 International Labour Organization, “THE GREAT GREEN CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE JAMAHIRIYAN ERA,” June 12, 1988, <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/SERIAL/57641/65910/F702695289/LBY57641.PDF>

61 HM Prison Service England and Wales, *Annual Report & Accounts April 2002 to March 2003*, (London: 2003), inside front cover.

62 American Correctional Association, *The Corrections Certification Program Handbook*, August 2021, <https://aca.org/common/Uploaded%20files/Professional%20Development/Certification%20Handbook.pdf>

ated or at risk of incarceration improves the quality of life in prison and post incarceration. Depending on the training programs that are being offered to officers, staff could include everyone in the prison to participate in a class. Not only does this provide an outlet for education for everyone in the prison, but it also creates a bonding experience as two distinct groups of individuals (officers and the incarcerated) learn and grow with each other. Another way to reduce recidivism is to increase the support that is offered to the incarcerated both inside and outside of prison walls. The Bard Prison Initiative is an exemplary program showing that support does not only have to come from officers.

Finally, one of the main ways to reduce recidivism is by reducing the stigma that surrounds those incarcerated now and in the past. In their article “A Better Path Forward for Criminal Justice: Prisoner Re-Entry,” Annelies Goger, David J. Harding, and Howard Henderson report that “more than half of the formerly incarcerated are unable to find stable employment within their first year of return and three-fourths of them are rearrested within three years of release.” Without being able to find employment and, for many, housing, the formerly incarcerated are unable to sustain a life for themselves and their families, causing a return to crime. Goger, Harding, and Howard share several ways to reduce stigma around the formerly incarcerated. They suggest,

...ending restrictions on occupation licensing, safety net programs, and hiring for those with criminal records, increasing access to services related to housing, employment, health/addiction, and social reintegration, and update outdated security rules and technology policies in correctional facilities that limit the development of new rehabilitation programming.<sup>63</sup>

Working to support the current and formerly incarcerated to establish a stable home and work life will allow for a reduction in recidivism and an increase in and economic stability in the U.S.

63 Annelies Goger, David J. Harding, and Howard Henderson, “A Better Path Forward for Criminal Justice: Prisoner Reentry,” Brookings. April 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-better-path-forward-for-criminal-justice-prisoner-reentry/#:-:>

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# Landscape Ecology of Prairie Patches in Southern Missouri

**Emilyn Gilmore**

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## *Abstract*

Habitat fragmentation is the process where large complex habitats are divided and separated into smaller “patches” with little transitional habitat between one habitat type to the next. Fragmentation is largely an anthropogenic issue caused by development, spread of agriculture, and improper management of land. Prairies and grasslands are particularly at risk and these habitats are home to species of plants, mammals and other wildlife groups that rely on large unfragmented grasslands to thrive. The historic prairies of Missouri have been heavily fragmented and isolated from one another and many of the prairie patches are surrounded by agriculture and other less than ideal landcover types. Here, I aim to understand the effects of agriculture on the native plant communities within prairie patches of southern Missouri. Using the Quantum Geographic Information System (QGIS) and the statistical programming language R, we show that increased agriculture surrounding a prairie decreases native plant richness within the plant community of the prairie patches in our study. Missouri’s landscape is dominated by agriculture and the remnants of prairie are likely becoming both encroached upon and isolated from one another by agricultural land use.

*Keywords:* fragmentation, prairies, agriculture, landscape ecology, grasslands



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## INTRODUCTION

The process of habitat fragmentation is an accelerating and worrying pattern that threatens both plant and wildlife species across the globe and has led to an overall decline in species diversity for many habitats and ecoregions (Newbold et al., 2016). Fragmentation is an anthropogenic problem, stemming largely from human alteration of landcover away from natural successional patterns and landscape cycles. Fragmentation of habitat particularly threatens habitat specialists and patches of landscape that are isolated from source populations. Disturbance, or alteration of habitat away from the natural state, alters land cover and use and separates remnant habitat patches from each other. This can lead to worries of species isolation and community assemblages—changes that may be irreversible (Lacher et al., 2019). Species richness and abundance declines when fragmentation of ideal habitats occurs (Palmeirim et al., 2020) and diversity in fragmented landscapes depends upon the remaining quality habitat amount (Fahrig, 2003).

Prairie and grassland habitats are among the most threatened habitats in North America. Agriculture and grazing are the largest negative factors facing grasslands and the future of these habitats depends upon agricultural practices (Ceballos et al., 2010; Curtin & Western, 2008). For example, research has shown that over the last few decades, mammal communities dependent on grassland landscapes are in decline (Ceballos et al., 2010). The grasslands of North America were once home to megafauna and large migratory populations of hoofed herbivores as recently as the 1800s, these populations were sustained by the large and unfragmented habitat that allowed for migration and continued foraging of resources. Because of this, open and connected landscapes are essential for large mammalian conservation. To conserve and preserve healthy and viable grasslands, maintaining a “seminatural matrix” of landscapes will be vital (Brown et al., 2003).

Historically, the Missouri Landscape was home to nearly 15 million acres of tallgrass prairie. Of this 15 million, according to the Missouri Prairie Foundation, only 50,000 scattered small prairie patches remain compared against the historical covering of the west side of the state. These prairie patches are home to species of conservation concern for both plant and animal life as well as being culturally significant for the Ni-U-Ko'n-Ska (Osage), Nyut/vachi (Missouria), Asakiwaki and Meskwaki (Sac and Fox), Báxoje (Ioway), Kaw, and other Native American nations. The prairie patches of Missouri are home to upwards of 340 native species of plant life which are threatened by introduced species and habitat loss (Wilcove et al., 1998). Prairie patches are greatly affected by their surrounding areas, and being near human

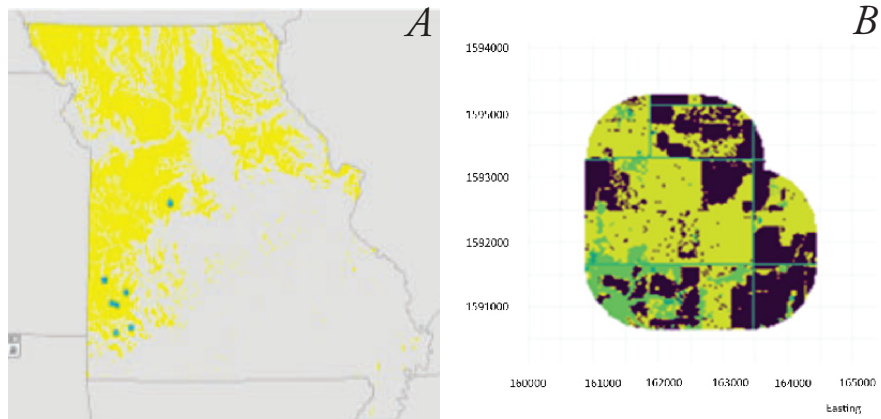
development has shown to have a positive effect upon nonnative species invading prairie patch edges (ROWE et al., 2013). The Missouri prairie patches have been largely fragmented and isolated from each other and continue to be encroached upon by non-prairie species. While some of the patches are remnants of larger prairie systems, many have been replanted in the hopes of cultivating a thriving prairie patch. The success of such efforts to preserve native prairies and promote replanted prairies may be outside the control of researchers, as these landscapes are surrounded by undesirable matrix habitat including agriculture, human development, and woodlands. Missouri's landcover is now dominated by agriculture, and very few pre-colonization habitats remain within the state. Many species of both plant and animal can find it difficult to cross agricultural matrices, meaning the prairie patches of Missouri may be becoming increasingly ecologically isolated. Out of the prairies in Missouri, many are less than 100 acres in size which is likely below a size that can maintain larger species of wildlife dependent on grassland habitat.

Here I aim to understand the surrounding area of the prairie patches and create a larger picture of the landscape that is in and around the prairie patches of southern Missouri. Analyzing the surrounding area of a prairie patch could lead to a greater understanding of what is happening within the prairie plant community that may not be explained by other ecological theories such as the island biogeography theory. According to this theory, we would have expected larger prairie patches to have increased species richness. While initially interested in small mammal community dynamics, this project focused on plant community differences for each prairie and their response to surrounding matrix landscape. Based on an increasing amount of agriculture in the matrix, we predicted that the plant community inside the prairie would be less diverse with less species richness. As Missouri is largely agricultural outside cities, agricultural land cover was our primary interest variable.

## **METHODS**

To understand and analyze the fragmented prairie patches in southern Missouri, we began by selecting prairies with a history of small mammal trapping and prairies of interest with both the Missouri Prairie foundation and the Missouri Department of Conservation. The chosen prairies with QGIS (QGIS3.10) data came to be Drover's, Schuette, Bruns Tract, Friendly, Golden, La Petite Gemme, Linden's, Lordi Marker, Coyne, Welsh, Denison, Lattner, Pleasant Run Creek, and The Rae Letsinger Prairie, all of which are located within southwestern or central Missouri. I obtained 2020 Cropscape landcover data from the National Agricultural Statistics Service government

website and clipped the data for individual prairies or aggregations of prairies using QGIS14. I first created a 1 km buffer around each prairie then used the “clip” tool to extract only those cells that coincided with the buffer (Fig. 1B). If prairies were located next to other prairies in the study, I merged the buffer polygons before extraction.



**Figure 1.** A. Map of Grassland historically present in Missouri and the current prairie patches in our study. B. Golden prairie with its buffer zone. Golden is relatively visible at this stage of analysis due to the prairie patches' contrast with its surroundings.

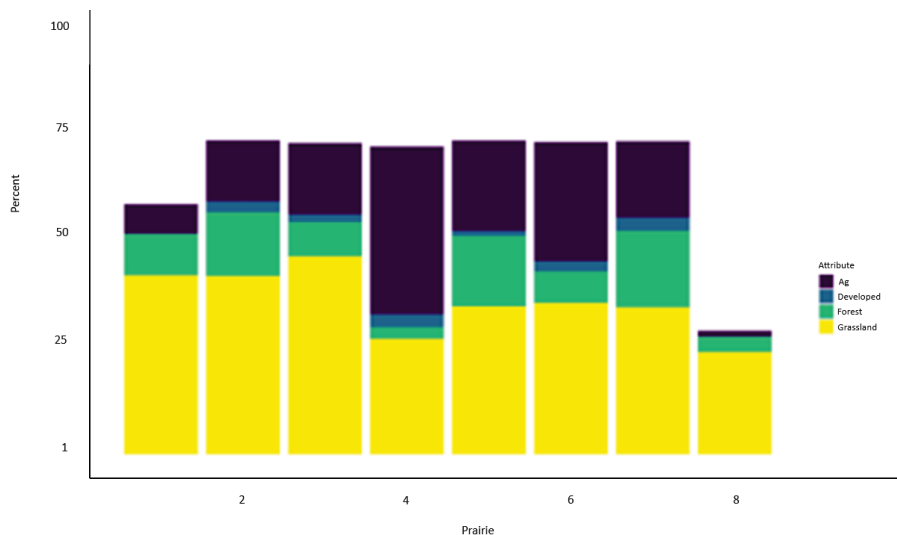
I used R (version 4.0.4) and R studio (version 1.4.1106) to extract landscape metrics using packages “landscapemetrics,” “landscapetools,” “raster,” “dplyr,” “rdgal,” and “vegan1.” I reclassified and aggregated classifications of Cropscape into four main categories we were interested in: agriculture, development, woodlands, and grassland. By aggregating the categories of landscape use we were able to see contrast more easily in land use and habitat type for both the prairie and the surrounding buffer zone. For each of the prairies we then used the four main categories to show the cores or large sections of continuous habitat present in the overall system and using the “landscapemetrics” package pulled the metrics for each of the four main categories. To continue this reclassification of prairies for future prairies, we wrote a function that prairies and other landscape data could be input into to reclassify into the four categories of interest. We wrote another function that performed the job of congregating the core areas in the landscape. After pulling all the metrics from each of the prairies, we chose desired metrics with meaning to our questions. We chose the metrics core area (ca), total core area (tca), disjunct core area (dcad), standard deviation of core area (area\_sd), and core area as percentage of landscape (cpland). We then separated the prairie data into two sets, one with just the buffer and one the entire system for analysis.



Lastly, for the plant community data, we received floristic assessments of eleven of the prairies provided by the Missouri Prairie Foundation and Bruce Schuette. From these assessments we picked several variables of interest including native quality, native COFC (a coefficient of native floristic species), and native species richness and loaded data into R studio to compare against the landscape data from the prairies. We used linear models to compare each variable of landscape data against the data from the floristic assessment.

## RESULTS

Land cover for each of the prairies and surrounding area varied in part to size of the prairie and the cover bordering the prairie patch. The prairie with the largest percentage of grassland was the Denison, Lattner and Pleasant Run Creek prairie cluster which aligns with the overall size of the three prairies which border each other (Fig. 3). The prairie with the lowest grassland cover was The Rae Letsinger prairie. While not the smallest in area, the prairie had lower values for percent land cover of the four main categories than every other prairie. The smallest prairie, La Petite Gemme, at only 37 acres, had similar grassland percentages as the other larger prairies. (Fig. 2) Agriculture was the second most common buffer and prairie land cover type.

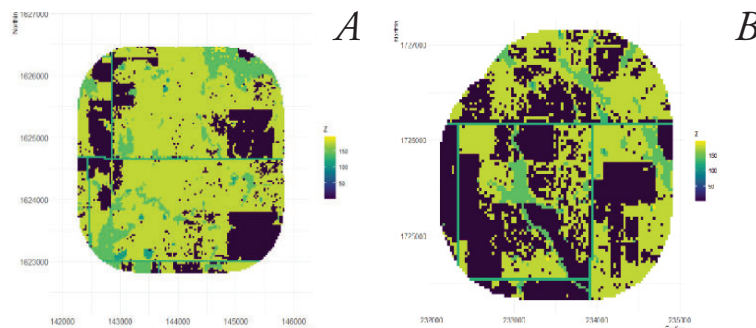


**Figure 2.** Percent land cover for Agriculture, development, forest, and grassland for each of the eight prairie groups. Prairies listed in the order: (1) La Petite Gemme; (2) Coyne and Welsh Tract; (3) Denison, Lattner and Pleasant Run Creek; (4) Dorris; (5) Friendly; (6) Golden; (7) Linden's; and (8) The Rae Letsinger Prairie. This graph includes Dorris, another prairie of interest but does not include Linden's, Brun's Tract, or Drover as they were added to the project later.

The average core area of agriculture across the prairie buffers is 235.83 hectares with an average of 20.46 percent landcover (Table 1). Brun’s Tract had the greatest agricultural landcover in the buffer zone (501.12 hectares) accounting for 61.42 percent of landcover and Schuette had the least (47.52 hectares) accounting for only 0.92 percent of buffer landcover. Out of the prairies with floristic data available, Golden prairie has the highest agricultural landcover (402.84 hectares) surrounding the prairie, which accounts for 25.68 percent of the buffer zone. Interestingly, while Drover’s buffer only had 364.86 hectares of agricultural land in the buffer, this accounted for 39.51 percent of the landcover which is the prairie (of the floristic group) with the highest percentage of agriculture surrounding the patch (Fig. 3). Overall, Schuette prairie had the lowest values of core area of agriculture, having only 47.52 hectares making up 0.92 percent of the buffer zone.

Prairie	Grassland	% Grassland	Woodland	% Woodland	Agriculture	% Agriculture	Development	% Development
Brun's Tract	77.85	1.77	17.37	0.636	501.12	61.42	24.84	0.01
Coyne	391.5	31.55	147.96	10.48	142.2	9.59	26.64	0.01
Denison	547.74	33.25	118.71	5.49	264.33	15.55	29.43	0.02
Dorris	202.68	14.51	22.23	0.44	364.86	39.51	26.55	0.02
Drover	202.68	14.51	22.23	0.44	364.86	39.51	26.55	0
Friendly	213.21	18.55	105.48	113.09	135.63	9.63	7.47	0.01
Golden	368.37	20.01	108.54	4.45	402.84	25.68	35.46	0.027
Linden	288.9	18.23	164.07	11.08	170.91	9.5	30.33	0
La Petite Gemme	267.75	27.75	84.87	6.36	96.75	6.9	15.03	0.01
The Rae Letsinger	362.7	36.64	50.31	2.46	103.14	6.93	15.12	0.01
Schuette	281.07	31.61	128.07	10.94	47.52	0.92	8.91	0
<b>Mean</b>	<b>291.31</b>	<b>22.58</b>	<b>88.17</b>	<b>15.08</b>	<b>235.83</b>	<b>20.47</b>	<b>22.39</b>	<b>0.011</b>

**Table 1.** Core Area of the four main Landscape cover types. Data pulled from the “landcapemetrics” package for the eleven prairies of interest. Core area is measured in Hectares. Percentage of core area is shown to complete an understanding of the buffer zone surrounding each prairie. Prairies with proximity to each other are clustered together.



**Figure 3.** A. Dennison, Lattner, Pleasant Run Creek Prairie Cluster with surrounding buffer zone. Color range is indicative of landcover. Navy = Agriculture, Green = Development, Yellow = Grassland/Prairie. B. Drover’s prairie, which comparatively has much higher agricultural use surrounding the prairie patch.

Grasslands surrounding the prairies made up an average of 22.58 percent of the buffer zone with the highest value surrounding the Denison, Lattner, and Pleasant Run Creek prairie cluster with 547.74 hectares of grassland. On

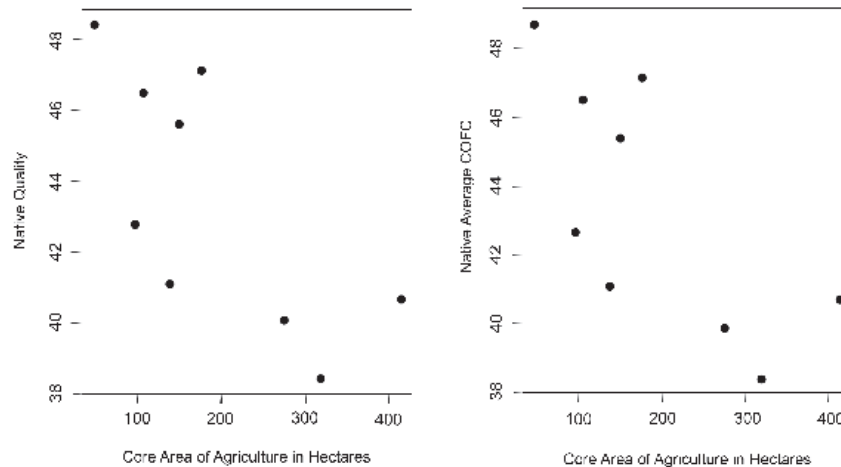
the lower end, Brun's Tract had the least amount of grassland cover (77.85 hectares) making up 1.77 percent of the buffer zone. Across the board, grassland made up the highest average buffer landcover type, but only narrowly above agriculture on average. A higher percentage of grassland cover surrounding the prairie would increase connectivity between the prairie patches allowing for both wildlife and plants to disperse across the region. Agriculture and human development might present challenges for wildlife, depending on each species' ability to move through disturbed or fragmented landscapes.

Prairie	Area (acres)	COFC score	Native Richness	Native Quality
Coyne	80	4.54	197	4.563
Denison	320	3.99	343	4.006
Lattner	120	4.49	97	4.95
Pleasant Run Creek	180	4.25	280	4.246
Drover	80	3.84	256	3.84
Friendly	40	4.11	302	4.109
Golden	320	4.07	329	4.067
North West Lawerance	40	4.64	195	4.636
Lordi Marker	400	4.42	148	4.446
Linden	171	4.72	200	4.715
La Petite Gemme	37	4.27	332	4.28
Schuette	40	4.87	205	4.844
The Rae Letsinger	68	4.65	157	4.65
<b>Mean</b>	<b>145.85</b>	<b>4.37</b>	<b>233.92</b>	<b>4.41</b>

**Table 2.** Summary of Floristic Data used in Analysis. From the entire floristic report, we were primarily interested in the Native richness and COFC score given to each prairie.

The largest prairie with floristic data was Lordi Marker with a COFC score of 4.42. We were particularly interested in the effects of agriculture surrounding the prairie, due to the domination of agriculture across the Missouri landscape. The Denison, Lattner, Pleasant Run Creek prairie complex is the largest prairie patch in the study, the three prairies forming a patch with around 620 acres of prairie landcover. The complex had an average native species richness of 240, above average for the entire set.

We found that the core area of agriculture surrounding the prairies had a negative effect upon the native quality of the prairie plant community. (Estimate= -0.002169,  $t = -2.763$ ,  $p = 0.02799$ ) The values for native quality and native average COFC were similar numerically, leading to agriculture also having a negative effect on the COFC for the prairie patches. (Estimate= -0.0021917,  $t = -2.738$ ,  $p = 0.02899$ ) (Fig 4)



**Figure 4.** Graph depicting negative affect of Agriculture upon both Native COFC and Native Quality.

## DISCUSSION

Out of the eleven prairies that had both landscape and floristic data, Golden Prairie had both a below average COFC score and grassland cover percentage. This prairie is also the most agriculturally surrounded prairie of the eleven and the second most surrounded overall, following Brun's Tract. While the prairie is quite large (320 acres) compared against the other prairies in the group, the low native species richness for the prairie makes the patch stand out as a prairie of concern. Denison alone had the highest native species richness, and when combined with Lattner and Pleasant Run Creek, the complex is above average. Interestingly, Denison and Golden prairie are the same size, but Denison's proximity to other prairies and grasslands or the higher percentage of grassland landcover in the complexes' buffer zone might be a possible cause for higher species richness of the prairie.

Agriculture around an ecosystem patch effects a system's ability to bounce back from negative impacts (Bartzen et al., 2010). Recovery from drought, fire, and other disturbances is quicker within larger ecosystems and ecosystems away from agriculture. Agriculture has also been shown to have a negative impact upon prairie invertebrates, another vital community group for ecosystem function (Euliss & Mushet, 1999). Research has shown having adequate plant cover is crucial to maintaining normal soil and ecosystem function for prairie ecosystems (Teague et al., 2011), the historic grazing that supported natural plant cover is no longer possible due to the fragmented

nature of the prairies of North America. The impact of agriculture for the prairie patches of southern Missouri is visible through our methods, but further work should be conducted investigating agricultural impact upon other wildlife groups.

To further this research, landscape data should be created and analyzed for each of the prairies that a floristic assessment was conducted to increase the total number of patches. Also, comparable floristic assessments should be conducted on prairies not owned by the Missouri Prairie foundation to better understand the role of management for prairies across Missouri and to again increase the number of patches in the study. A major limitation of this study is based in the accuracy of the original satellite data collected through the National Agricultural Statistics Service. The website claims to have 80 percent accuracy for landscape data.

The results of this study imply that further research needs to be done on the effects of agriculture and other human development land uses on natural systems, specifically the remnant and replanted prairies of Missouri. These systems are quite small and many of them are isolated and being encroached upon. The area that surrounds an ecosystem has a great deal of impact upon both plant and animal life within a patch, so as Missouri and other areas become more fragmented, the remaining patches of native ecosystem will continue to decline in quality regardless of management of the patch itself.

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## “I Had a Soul Before I Was Born!” & “An Ode to Happy Weight”

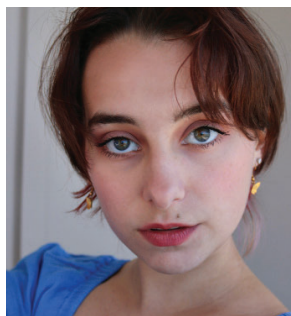
**Morgan Green**

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### *Abstract*

“I Had a Soul Before I was Born” was prompted by the conversation around abortion and the potential of conception. Inspired by billboards lining my hometown of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, I used rhetoric pulled from pro-life arguments to build my voice and used those billboards to represent how those arguments are constantly put before me. Internal rhyme and alliteration help the narrative flow between the stanzas and the clichés of the last lines are purposeful—used to quote political rhetoric about the alt-right pipeline.

“An Ode to Happy Weight” originated from an assignment in my Advanced Poetry class that asked students to create an ode. I decided to focus on the beauty of weight gain after being ill and underweight for a long period of time. By pairing visceral language with alliteration and repetition, the poem is meant to have a bouncing rhythm beneath a struggling story of regrowth. The last stanza is inspired by the turn in a sonnet, switching from sorrow to gratitude. It is an ode to my own development and healing.



**Morgan Green** is a senior Creative Writing major. They are an avid poet and mixed-medium artist. Their literary interests include historical fiction and queer poetry. They plan to attend graduate school for writing in the future. They hope to publish more poems. These pieces were written for Creative Writing: Poetry II taught by Marcus Cafagña.



## **I HAD A SOUL BEFORE I WAS BORN!**

Though I am sitting here with you now,  
my psyche is caught ten miles back  
in that ditch we drove past, beneath  
a billboard claiming our baby has a soul already.

We haven't fucked yet, but we have ambition  
and that's all those right-wing breeders think  
it takes to win back the white majority—  
Ambition and unsafe, same-race, heterosexual humping.

They pray that an accidental Aryan pregnancy  
escapes our perception until a heartbeat,  
the probability of this killing me gets muted  
when the ultrasound kicks on.

They don't care that I die in the ice freezer  
after they rip open my clam legs  
to reap my precious pressure pearl,  
they carry a clean slate, covered in vaginal mucus  
and slide him down the pipeline  
and into the mouth of the beast.

## AN ODE TO HAPPY WEIGHT

There was a weary cemetery of one  
with my body at the bottom of an open hole,

and long we,  
the ground and me,  
would decompose,  
and I felt myself  
melting into the wood below me  
and the soil beneath the casket  
and the emptiness beneath that.

I could not see the sweet storm  
that would replenish my body,  
hover over my grave and rain  
into my long-dry eye sockets,  
floating my vision to the surface  
and building up my boney face

my broken jaw was Aquarius  
catching water to fill up my ankles,  
knees, and mons pubis,  
spreading up to balloon my organs  
and moistening my jerkied skin,  
oil seeping from begotten glands and  
softening my stripped hair

I could have feared the clouds  
flooding my sorrowful dead place and  
finally drowning the restless zombie,  
finishing my endless wait

I could have pulled the loose earth  
into my mortal remains of mold  
burying the last of myself in the dirt and  
finally closing that open hole

but instead,  
I let the pelting rain massage

my long-frozen body back to breathing,  
reanimating my dancing fat—  
and dance I did with my refurbished form  
in praise for the rain which consumed me.

## Silver-coated Endotracheal Tubes Reducing the Incidence of Ventilator Associated Pneumonia

**Caleb Huettenmeyer, Emily Jones, Madison Juncker, Emily Decker, and Madelyne Conn**

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### *Abstract*

An extensive literature review was conducted to analyze the effectiveness of silver-coated endotracheal tubes in preventing ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP). After researching, this paper found a large prevalence of VAP in patients with long-term intubation. There was also a decrease in the number of purulent discharges, fevers, and secretions that could lead to VAP in patients who were using silver-coated endotracheal tubes. The use of silver-coated endotracheal tubes over non-silver-coated endotracheal tubes should be supported due to the literature proving the decreased risk of developing VAP in patients who were intubated with the silver-coated tubes.

*Keywords:* endotracheal tubes, silver-coated, ventilator-associated pneumonia, intervention, patient outcomes, long-term intubation



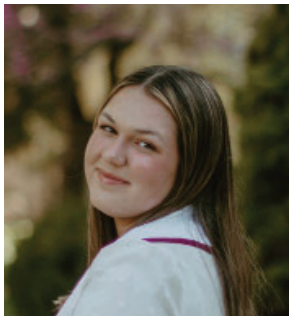
**Caleb Huettenmeyer** is a newly graduated nurse who is currently working at Barnes-Jewish hospital in the Emergency Department. He has dreams to further his education with a doctoral degree in anesthesia.



**Emily Jones** is a graduate student at Missouri State University. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Nursing in Spring 2023.



**Madison Juncker** graduated from the Missouri State University School of Nursing in May 2023. She currently works at Mercy Springfield in the Cardiovascular/Surgical ICU. She plans to continue furthering her nursing education by attaining certifications and eventually going back to graduate school for an advanced nursing degree.



**Emily Decker** is a Registered Nurse in the Neuro Trauma Intensive Care Unit. She is working on completing her graduate nurse program and hopes to one day achieve her CCRN certification.



**Madelyne Conn** is a May 2023 graduate from Missouri State. She completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing and took a job in the Cardiovascular Surgical Intensive Care Unit following graduation. She plans on obtaining certifications in the future related to critical care nursing and cardiac surgery, and may go back to school one day. Her literary interests include romance

This piece was written for Nursing Leadership and Management taught by Dr. Vicki Good.

## INTRODUCTION

For ventilated patients in intensive care units (ICU), the effect of silver-coated endotracheal tubes (ETT) compared to standard ETT was researched to determine if there was a decrease in ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) infections. ETts are disposable catheters inserted into the trachea to establish a patent airway and provide mechanical ventilation. The median duration of mechanical ventilation with ETts is less than 10 days (Tokmaji et al., 2015). Consequently, the risk of developing VAP is at its highest during the first 10 days of intubation.

VAP is one of the most common nosocomial infections in intubated ICU patients, occurring in 9 percent to 27 percent in this specific population (Tokmaji et al., 2015). While the standard ETT used today is made of polyvinyl chloride, silver-coated ETts work by slowly releasing silver cations to provide an antimicrobial effect. The etiology of VAP begins when bacteria forms into a thick biofilm, spreading to the lungs, and resulting in pneumonia (Tokmaji et al., 2015). Interventions such as providing chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) oral care are commonly used; however, this requires accountability of the healthcare team, and is an additional task to complete (Saddki et al., 2017). This paper will focus on the implementation of silver-lined endotracheal tubes to decrease VAP infections.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### *Prevalence and Mortality*

In research done by Timsit et al. (2017), an overview of ventilator-associated pneumonia, including risk factors, epidemiology, prevention, and treatment, is reviewed. Regarding the theme of prevalence and mortality, VAP is the most frequent life-threatening nosocomial infection in ICUs, and late-onset VAP was reported to be associated with higher mortality rates compared to early-onset. A multistate model was used to determine the mortality for early-onset VAP was 5.8 percent, considerably lower than late-onset, which was 10.6 percent. To decrease prevalence, risk factors were identified, and intubation was the primary. The researchers recommended patients at risk of VAP be managed with multiple preventative measures such as CHG mouth wash, silver-coated ETT, and frequent suctioning. Timsit reviewed other studies to provide a general understanding of VAP, patients at risk, diagnostics, and treatments. The prevalence and mortality of VAP is preventable when risk factors are identified, interventions are efficiently used by the healthcare team, and a combination of treatments is used.

In the study done by Fadda and Ahmad (2022), the relationship between VAP and patient outcomes such as costs, length of mechanical ventilation, and mortality rates was comparable to non-ventilator associated pneumonia groups. A cross-sectional observational design with a convenience sample taken from ICUs in two hospitals consisting of 151 patients on mechanical ventilation, 101 with VAP and 50 with non-VAP, found the mean hospital length of stay was significantly higher in VAP compared to non-VAP. A high VAP rate due to mechanical ventilation increases ventilation needs, duration of stay, mortality, and attributed costs.

### *Intervention*

In the systematic review completed by Tokmaji et al. (2015), three randomized control trials were reviewed over the effect of silver-lined endotracheal tubes on the prevalence of VAP. In all three trials, a silver-coated endotracheal tube was tested against a non-coated endotracheal tube. This review showed a statistically significant decrease in prevalence of VAP with silver-coated endotracheal tubes as compared to non-coated tubes. A randomized control trial (RCT) completed by Tincu et al. (2022) studied 180 patients and used a noble metal-alloy endotracheal tube (ETT) in comparison with a standard ETT tube. In this random controlled trial, they found the noble metal-alloy ETT decreased the incidence of VAP for ICU patients requiring mechanical ventilation. In another randomized controlled trial completed by Damas et al. (2022), 323 patients were enrolled in the study with some being intubated with the noble metal-alloy coated ETT and the remainder with a standard ETT. This study showed support for noble metal alloy coated endotracheal tubes in the prevention of VAP. In the single-blind clinical trial completed by Mahmodiyeh et al., (2014), 108 intubated patients were studied with the use of silver-coated endotracheal tubes versus a standard endotracheal tube. In this study, the antimicrobial endotracheal tube reduced purulent discharge, fever, and secretions that could lead to VAP, making them more effective for patients than the standard non-coated ETT.

## **METHODS**

This project will be utilizing Lewin's Change Theory to implement the use of silver-coated endotracheal tubes to reduce the incidence of VAP. The first step in Lewin's theory is unfreezing, which involves noticing the problem, identifying stakeholders, and then notifying them of the problem and the change (Wojciechowski 2016). The problem being analyzed in this project is the incidence and mortality of VAP, as noted in the review of literature, the most life-threatening nosocomial infection in ICUs—costly for hospitals and

deadly to patients. The first step in this project will be spreading awareness of the problem throughout hospitals and to our stakeholders. It is important that people understand why this change needs to take place and the risks involved with not implementing the change.

This project also must identify stakeholders regarding this change and problem. A major stakeholder is the patient, as their health is at risk, they will benefit immensely from implementing this change. Hospitals as institutions are also a stakeholder as Ventilator Associated Pneumonia can cost a hospital as much as \$40,000 per patient to treat (Luckraz et al 2018). Treatment of VAP and length of stay for patients with VAP increase costs to hospitals which can be detrimental to the health system. Nurses are also stakeholders in this process. While nurses are supposed to be performing oral care and reducing the risk of VAP with other interventions, it can be hard to make sure it is being done. With silver-coated endotracheal tubes, an additional barrier is being introduced to help prevent VAP, possibly reducing the need for CHG swabs. Respiratory therapists and providers are also a stakeholder in this project, as they are the people who are going to be maintaining this device and intubating patients. To communicate to these groups of people, this project seeks to provide product representatives who will explain the benefits of the silver-lined endotracheal tubes. This communication will involve topics such as cost effectiveness and disease management benefits of the change.

The second step in Lewin's Change Theory is implementing the change and thorough communication with our stakeholders about concerns and questions. This project seeks to involve leaders of each of the stakeholder groups, such as charge nurses, unit educators, unit providers, etc. Meetings held with leaders will take questions and feedback to help implement change, after the leaders of these groups have met, meetings will be held all together so the group's concerns and questions can be heard and understood. Educators are very important in this step of the change process as they can communicate efficiently to their corresponding groups. Hospital management needs to be included as to enact policy change regarding the use of silver-coated endotracheal tubes. Intubation protocols and procedures will need to include silver-coated endotracheal tubes instead of the standard endotracheal tubes. This will reinforce the change is being implemented and management is on board.

Another way this project plans to educate staff and patients about this change is flyers around the unit. Benefits and supporting literature will be displayed in a way that is easy to read and digest. This will help further drive our change. Resistance might be encountered with providers who aren't used to using silver-coated endotracheal tubes, so it is important for medical direc-



tors and product representatives to explain the benefits of this change to them and continually push for this intervention to be implemented.

The last step in Lewin's Change Theory is refreezing. This step is reached when everyone has bought into this change and is set on moving forward with it. Policy change is very important in making this change permanent, intubation protocols will need to include the silver-coated endotracheal tubes. A barrier to this refreezing process is some stakeholders may be resistant to change, but this can be overcome utilizing education and in-services to show proof and ease of use to these stakeholders. The stakeholders need to be checked in on to see how they are adjusting and whether they have further questions or feedback about this change.

This project seeks to implement a 90-day trial period where only silver-coated endotracheal tubes are utilized in the intubation of patients. After the 90 days, leaders will be sent surveys to provide feedback on the new change. It is important to continually communicate with these people to make sure there isn't any new pushback. This project also seeks to use quantitative measurements to evaluate results of the change. Parameters measured will be evidence and prevalence of VAP and ICU patient length of stay. These parameters will further drive our change and create a new normal on the unit. This project is positive the utilization of Lewin's Change Theory will create a seamless transition from previous interventions to prevent VAP to the silver-coated endotracheal tube in VAP prevention.

## RESULTS

This project will use a stage-based measurement system to facilitate the changes the new protocols will require. There will be three stages as a part of this system; two stages that include 90-day trials where we implement the use of silver-coated endotracheal tubes in all intubated patients, with the last stage involving the finalization of the new protocols. During the first 90-day trial period, it is imperative that the medical directors of the stakeholder departments along with device representatives meet with the stakeholders to provide them with effective education on proper use of these new devices, and management of long-term use. After this 90-day period, a series of round tables will be held with each department where questions can be answered, and suggestions made. The next 90-day trial will be used to make new changes for the protocols to run more effectively, and further collect data on the prevalence of VAP in the population of intubated patients.

After this period, another series of round-tables will be held, and data will be presented to administration on what these trials have found. The final

stage of this project will be to have a six-month period where the stakeholders will continue to utilize these new protocols with their patients. The main purpose of this period is to focus on the long-term effects that intubation can have on a patient; and how well the implementation of silver-coated endotracheal tubes is changing these long-term effects. During this stage, administration will perform audits of the charts and continue to collect data on the prevalence of VAP in intubated patients. Finally, when the final stage concludes there will be a presentation of final data that was collected during the one-year span of this project, and hospital administrators and medical directors will decide if they want to continue these protocols in the future. The long-term management will be monthly audits on prevalence of VAP in this at-risk population and yearly assessments of the protocol allowing for it to be amended as the hospital sees fit.

## DISCUSSION

After reviewing the literature surrounding silver-coated endotracheal tubes and their ability to reduce VAP, this paper found that the research supports this change. Not only would this implementation reduce the incidence of VAP, but it would also decrease mean hospital stays and reduce spending costs of the hospital in treatment. Before deciding whether to incorporate silver-coated endotracheal tubes, consider the strengths and weaknesses of this project.

This paper is meant to compare the effects of the silver-coated endotracheal tubes with standard endotracheal tubes and reduction of the incidence of VAP. This project's aim was to create a plan of action for these specific patients. This project did not cover tracheostomy patients, which means they must be excluded from consideration for those receiving mechanical ventilation. Additionally, this project did not investigate the effectiveness of silver-coated endotracheal tubes when combined with CHG. These two methods combined might decrease the incidence of VAP; however the literature reviewed did not research this specifically. Lastly, the cost effectiveness is not in the endotracheal tube itself, due to the silver-coated tubes costing more than the non-silver-coated tubes, but in the decreased stays of patients and patients not contracting VAP, because hospital acquired infections must be paid for by the hospital. In the future, utilizing silver-coated tracheal tubes must be investigated to be able to include this population in the change implementation. Bundling CHG oral care with the silver-coated endotracheal tube should also be investigated. The two interventions together have the possibility to reduce the incidence of VAP greater than one on its own. The

research was limited in this project and did not include combination efforts with both interventions.

Our research has found a significant reduction in VAP when using silver-coated endotracheal tubes, while rates of VAP increased when non-silver-coated endotracheal tubes were used. Secondly, this implementation would not affect many people due to the nature of the change. Physicians and anesthesiologists are the ones placing the tube and may have to incorporate a slightly different technique when intubating a patient. Besides intubation, the rest of the care would remain the same; meaning nurses and respiratory therapists would not need to change their plan of care. No waste would be produced either, because this change would happen after all other non-silver-coated endotracheal tubes are used.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND CONCLUSION**

Silver-coated endotracheal tubes are providing another barrier in reducing the incidence of VAP. With this implementation, patients would spend less time needing ventilation, would reduce hospital stays, and mortality, as well as acquiring other infections and diseases due to increased time spent with mechanical ventilation, would decrease. Nurse and Respiratory Therapist satisfaction would increase because with decreased hospital stays comes less demand for workers. Lastly, it would decrease hospital spending costs on VAP. In future research, the effectiveness of CHG and silver-coated endotracheal tubes combined could be reviewed.

In conclusion, the purpose of this project was to create a change that is beneficial to the patient and the healthcare team. This paper aims to implement silver-coated endotracheal tubes to prevent the incidence of VAP. After reviewing literature on the prevalence, the incidence, and the effectiveness of silver-coated endotracheal tubes in reducing VAP, this paper found that using silver-coated endotracheal tubes does reduce the incidence of VAP. Further, this implementation is shown to reduce mortality in ventilated patients, reduce hospital stays, decrease hospital costs, and increase patient satisfaction and health care team satisfaction.

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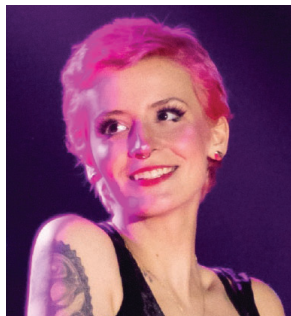
## “Grandpa,” “Grandma,” “To Clewell,” “How Could I,” & “Dosage”

**J Librach**

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### *Abstract*

The following poems from my time at Missouri State University share the theme and goal of working through grief and pain. These poems helped me work through the loss of my grandparents, the loss of a cherished professor from my previous university, and the loss of myself I felt through depressive episodes and previous toxic relationships. In working through my own trauma and specific experiences, I hope to highlight themes and emotions that can connect with people outside of myself and help them feel less alone.



**J Librach** is a recent Missouri State graduate having received their BFA in Studio Art and a Minor in Creative Writing in May 2023 with Cum Laude honors. They plan to attend graduate school in the future to pursue their MFA. Currently, J’s time is spent developing their burlesque career and exploring the world of costume design. They hope to one day be able to make their living off of their various creative endeavors. These pieces were written for Creative Writing: Poetry II and Advanced Writing: Poetry taught by Marcus Cafagña.

## GRANDPA

Each passing day  
collecting stray threads  
and cat hairs.  
The faint smell of  
cigarettes, undetectable  
in another wash or two.  
He's quit.  
Hasn't smoked in sixteen years  
at least.  
Still a hint of Marlboro remains.  
I see him more now,  
almost every day. Resting  
on my shoulders  
on heavily fogged roads.  
I don't think too much  
about it, but I miss him.  
I have to  
but I don't  
remember much.  
I've had his coat over twice as long.  
It's far from threadbare  
but it should be  
ash in the ocean  
or in the urn on the mantle.  
It isn't, so at least it should be  
able to tell me  
*it's hard to die*  
and that it's alright  
I don't remember  
him. But it isn't  
him.  
It's just a coat.

## GRANDMA

Tired pale eyes  
lazily gaze  
around the room.  
The corners  
of pastel pink lips  
pull upward  
to reveal a decades-old smile.  
The sunken eyes land  
on the smallest child  
with the tiniest voice,  
“Shalom, bubbe.”  
A flash of  
recognition  
and a glow  
of cognizance.  
“Shalom, Shayna punim,”  
croons the feathery voice.  
The flash disappears.  
The glow fades.  
Tired pale eyes  
lazily gaze  
around the room.



## TO CLEWELL

*“Now, if you’ll excuse me... I’m being followed by a moon shadow... Over and way out” — DC*

Pouring rain threatened to put out  
the lit cigarette  
held in the thin, nearly translucent fingers  
of the white-haired man  
standing in the wooden doorway of Pearson House.  
His full beard, wire-framed glasses,  
and boundless energy juxtaposed  
by the handful of yawning,  
clean-cut college students crowding around him.  
He conducted himself with his hands  
as he spoke  
in rhythm with the jazz tune only he could hear.

The discography of Cat Stevens  
fills my room  
as I try to honor this white-haired man  
who once told me Cat was never really his thing.  
I’m remembering the emphasis  
he placed on  
line breaks.  
The not-so-subtle first lines  
of “Longer Boats” play  
and I’m reminiscing  
on suggesting he might enjoy  
its allusion to alien abduction  
and him presenting me the following class with  
a 1973 *Star Magazine* interview  
with Cat.  
The irony of writing a tribute  
to the same man who said  
not to treat poetry like a  
pseudo-diary  
isn’t lost on me.  
I find myself smiling a little

as I make sure to include a line about  
a couple tears rolling down my cheek  
and hope that  
somewhere  
he's seeing the irony in it, too.

## How Could I

prefer the way my heels poke through the holes of my socks  
and stick to the faux-leather lining my hiking boots  
or the splashed sidewalk puddles  
that creep up the legs of my denim jeans  
and cling, heavy,  
on my calves  
to you.

How could I not  
miss your cold,  
wet tongue  
forcing its way past my teeth  
and flooding my mouth  
with the taste of  
stale morning breath  
and your coworker.

How could I  
resist your rough hand  
stretching the threads of my shirt  
as your make your way up  
and deform the cups of my bra  
or leaving imprints of your fingerprints  
on my wrists.

Apologies,  
for how could I wish  
to ever leave you.

## DOSAGE

A fourth of a small orange pill  
and two multivitamins.  
Washed down with a flat can of Reign energy  
Or a cup of coffee.  
Two iron pills.  
Two vitamin C and two vitamin B complex gummies.  
One dietary supplement shake.  
Still,  
my eyelids are heavy  
and drool seeps from my lips  
and pools on my pillow.  
What vitamin is there left to take?  
What pill?  
I can't stay awake.  
The closest to alert I feel  
is racing in my chest  
or pounding behind my eyes.  
I'm not sure why I still try.  
500% of the daily value.  
300 milligrams.  
12 hours of sleep.  
For what?  
A few hours of energy  
and a poorly written poem.

# Criminalization of Sex and Biopower

**Samara Mizutani Cesar**

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## *Abstract*

Controlling the culture of sex has been of interest to the nation-state because sex concerns both the individual body and the species body. The criminal justice system has become one of the primary agents of control in this matter, and as a result, it has adversely impacted sexually marginalized groups. With a focus on homosexuality and sex work, this paper draws on Foucault's concept of biopower to examine the criminal justice system's role in disciplining the body and regulating the population. By framing homosexuality and sex work as a moral issue, the criminalization of sex has normalized discriminatory practices against minority groups. The gay and sex worker bodies have been socioeconomically marginalized, denied access to healthcare and other resources, and disregarded when harmed by the public and the system. Bodies belonging to different marginalized identities have especially felt the impact of criminalization most intensely. It is crucial to examine the exercise of biopower and the criminalization of sex by the criminal justice system in order to develop fair practices and influence other institutions.

*Keywords:* Foucault, power, criminalization, homosexuality, sex work



**Samara Mizutani Cesar** is pursuing a Master of Science degree in Criminology. She is passionate about applying research to advocate for marginalized communities. Her research interests include sexual violence, ethnic injustice, and restorative justice. Upon graduation, she hopes to pursue a Doctoral degree to further contribute to these areas. This piece was written for Difference and Diversity in Criminology taught by Dr. Marijana Kotlaja.

Sex—not merely the act or the anatomical features, but its encompassing elements such as sexuality and sexual orientation—has long been of interest to social researchers and the public. It is important to note that sex, as a culture, is subject to change. Aspects of sex vary among cultures and across times. For example, while many indigenous cultures in North America have a long history of honoring Two-Spirit individuals, Christian traditions, for the most part, stigmatized individuals who did not fit into the roles of the gender binary. In modern American society, people are becoming more open to exploring and claiming their sexuality without being confined by traditional roles and norms. This social movement is changing the perceptions and structures of the traditional systems composed predominantly of heterosexual, cisgender, and middle- and upper-class cultures.

Like any attempt to challenge dominant structures, sex-related movements have faced resistance. The criminal justice system has deeply embedded such resistance in the form of legislation and its ideological and practical enforcement. The rules established and reinforced by the government through the criminal justice system ideologically produce the greatest good for most people. However, such a utilitarian perspective on criminal justice has often justified the abuse, exploitation, and control of minority groups, taking advantage of their underrepresentation in the system. As a result, there have been many overt and covert practices criminalizing aspects of sex as an attempt to control minority groups' rights and access to resources.

What constitutes a crime is not an absolute truth but often a reflection of power in a particular society. The common law tradition presents two classifications of crime—*mala in se* and *mala prohibita*. *Mala in se* refers to behaviors that are inherently immoral or wrong. *Mala prohibita* refers to criminal behaviors prohibited by statutes that are not necessarily considered wrong per se by the state and society in general. Minority groups have been controlled by legislations and enforcements that criminalize them by forbidding their sexual expressions and practices as if those were *mala in se*. A recent example of this perception is the comment made by Russian President Vladimir Putin; he criticized gender fluidity and mentioned that allowing and advocating for transgender rights was “on the verge of a crime against humanity” (Cheng, 2021). By posing gender fluidity and its advocacy as a crime against humanity, he conveyed that the culture—and even the existence—of gender and sexual minorities were *mala in se*.

In this light, this paper examines how the criminal justice system has exercised power through the criminalization of sex and the implications such practices had on sexually marginalized groups. Discriminatory practices that have controlled and oppressed minority groups, specifically gay individuals

and sex workers, are discussed. By drawing on the Foucauldian concept of biopower, it is demonstrated that exercising power through discriminatory practices in the criminal justice system is related to the discipline of the body and regulation of the population. Finally, the paper ends with a discussion of why it is significant to acknowledge the normalization of sex criminalization in efforts to develop fair practices and inclusivity.

## Literature Review

### *Biopower*

The principal philosophical foundation of this paper—which brings attention to the control of bodies and its normalization by the criminal justice system—is based on Michel Foucault’s theories related to sexuality and biopower. Foucault was a French philosopher renowned for his groundbreaking works on power, knowledge, and institutions, significantly influencing postmodernism. In *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Foucault (1978) discusses the historical shift from the “right of death” to the “power over life.” In the Middle Ages, sovereign power used to be exercised by the monarch, who asserted and exercised their “right to take life or let live” (Foucault, 1978, p. 136), which was their absolute power over their subjects’ lives.

Although this type of sovereign power still exists, Foucault (1978) argues that it has mainly been replaced by “a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death” (p.138). The primary difference between these two discourses is that, while the monarch used to exercise the power to seize life by suppressing it, modern institutions’ policies and approaches are led by the preservation and fostering of life. A contemporarily relevant illustration of these concepts in the criminal justice system is the limited practice of the death penalty and the exponential rise of life imprisonment as an alternative sentencing option (Bessler, 2015). Life imprisonment simultaneously preserves life by not killing the individual and disallows it by confining them until their death. In other words, life imprisonment, which can be interpreted as the power over life, has largely displaced the death penalty, one of the most explicit forms of the right of death.

Foucault (1978) further argues that the power over life, or biopower, evolved in two forms: the discipline of the body and the regulation of the population. According to him, the discipline of the body views the individual body as a machine that can be disciplined and optimized; on the other hand, the regulation of the population focuses on biological processes, such as reproduction, health, and mortality. While the former is concerned with controlling individuals through the imposition of social norms, the latter is

oriented toward managing populations and social groups through policies and other interventions. Sex is at the intersection of both the discipline of the body and the regulation of the population. Therefore, it has become a convenient channel for the nation-state and its institutions to implement power.

A common perception that power only and always takes a sovereign form and is communicated via a top-down process limits individuals' understanding of power. One of the most significant contributions of Foucault (1978) is the theoretical concept that power is all-pervasive. Power is exerted through normalization processes rather than only working through coercion and repression. It shapes and regulates individuals' and groups' behaviors by defining what is normal, many times without even being noticed. The law manifests such power, often operating more as internalized norms. If individuals were asked why they would not kill someone, most would probably say "because it is a bad thing" instead of "because I do not want to be caught and punished." This understanding of power's normalizing effects points to the critical role and influence of the criminal justice system on individual and collective bodies, which is discussed further in the following sections by focusing specifically on the functions and consequences of the criminalization of sex.

## **Criminalization of Homosexuality**

### *History of Criminalization*

As the LGBTQ+ rights movements are becoming more and more widespread and recognized, the criminal justice system's historical participation in discriminatory practices against gay people has also become notorious and subject to criticism. The mistreatment and disregard for this population's rights can be found in every component of the criminal justice system, such as law enforcement, courts, and corrections. Some of these concerns include, but are not limited to, homophobia within policing, the use of homosexual advance theory in courts, and sexual violence in prisons induced by prison subcultures (McNamara & Burns, 2018). These discriminatory practices by the criminal justice system undermine and deny the fundamental human rights and due process rights of gay individuals and communities. Such practices are not only in accord with Foucault's argument of the discipline of the body and regulation of the population, but they also have maintained and reinforced the dominant narratives of the time.

The origin of legal and criminal targeting of gay individuals in the U.S. dates back to sodomy laws. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that traditional sodomy laws were not exclusively directed at homosexuality. In the



nineteenth century, sodomy laws were construed broadly as a “crime against nature, committed with mankind or with beast” (Brief of the Cato Institute as amicus curiae in support of petitioners, 2003, p. 9). Instead of being used to punish homosexual relations and conduct, the laws sought to protect “public morals and decency” (p. 10), which, although an attempt to discipline the body, was not yet a concern of biopolitics.

In the twentieth century, sodomy laws changed dramatically in their nature and implementation, as punishing homosexuality became a way to both discipline the body and regulate the population. Oral and anal sex were wrongfully conflated with child molestation and, as a result, the state began enforcing sodomy laws and persecuting gay men (Brief of the Cato Institute as amicus curiae in support of petitioners, 2003). According to the ACLU (n.d.), nine states modified their sodomy laws to apply explicitly to gay people during the late 1960s and 1970s. Among other forms of discrimination, these laws controlled and regulated gay people’s sexuality, ability to form families, and means of survival by denying custody of their children, prohibiting adoption or foster parenting, and withholding job opportunities. In *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986), the Supreme Court deemed the Georgia sodomy law constitutional, establishing a precedent that upholds such discriminatory practices.

It was not until *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) that the U.S. Supreme Court would revisit this issue and finally recognize—in a federal court arena—the rights of gay people. Writing for the majority, Justice Kennedy noted that the sodomy statutes sought “to control a personal relationship that, whether or not entitled to formal recognition in the law, is within the liberty of persons to choose without being punished as criminals” (*Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003, p. 567). This ruling marked one of the most significant legal victories for the queer community in the U.S. Furthermore, the U.S. is not the only country that has made progress recognizing and granting fundamental rights to gay individuals. According to Equaldex (n.d.), 162 countries and territories have legalized homosexual activity, and 57 have legalized same-sex marriage.

Despite this progress, many countries and regions still have anti-gay laws, and some continue employing capital punishment for charges related to homosexual activities (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association, n.d.). Some countries have gone to extra lengths to push their anti-gay agenda. For example, Nigeria passed the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act in 2014, even though homosexuality was already prohibited in the country before the passage of this law (Arimoro, 2018). The redundant move of passing this new law sent an explicit message that the Nigerian government had no intention of recognizing and embracing the rights of gay people. Most recently, Uganda took a similar move by passing a new bill that imposes a life

sentence for homosexual acts and even the death penalty for some cases on top of an anti-queer bill that already existed (Okoth, 2023). In Senegal, just after the International Conference on AIDS in Africa, the police arrested and imprisoned nine HIV outreach workers based on “acts against nature,” even though there was no evidence that they had engaged in banned sexual activity (Beyrer, 2014, p. 2). As these cases reveal, the criminal justice systems in the world are still exercising their power to take life—either literally, in the form of death, or metaphorically, in the form of physical restriction.

Criminalizing same-sex relations, behaviors, and associated activities is noticeably harmful to gay individuals and communities. It denies many of their rights, including the right not to be discriminated against, the right to be equal before the law, the right to privacy, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to life. By legally depriving them of these rights, the criminal justice system has served as an agent of biopolitics, which is not in the best interests of all people. As a result, sexual and gender minorities experience heightened physical and mental health problems in the face of anti-queer legislation and practices (Horne et al., 2022; Cunningham et al., 2022; Hylton et al., 2017).

Moreover, by sending messages that the state does not tolerate homosexuality, criminalization has fueled public antagonism and violence toward queer populations. For instance, violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals substantially increased after Russia passed a gay propaganda law in 2013, which prohibited promoting non-heterosexual relations to minors (Kondakov, 2021). By setting up an environment where homophobia is morally justified and not punishing perpetrators of sex-related hate crimes, the criminal justice system is also exercising the power to disallow life—many times to the point of death.

Sex-related hate violence and a climate of fear lead to the discipline of the gay body by forcing these individuals out of their communities and away from clinical and outreach facilities (Beyrer, 2014). In fact, almost 72 percent of queer respondents in a survey reported having experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity after coming out to a doctor, including total refusal of essential care (Kucheryavenko et al., 2013). Legislations allowing religious exemptions would only exacerbate these conditions. Additionally, laws that criminalize the non-disclosure of HIV in sexual relations have also indirectly maintained the surveillance and regulation of the gay body (Khan, 2020). These cases further demonstrate that the nation-state has employed its power to disallow life to the point of death by impeding gay people from accessing healthcare.

*Decriminalization on the Surface*

Even in countries decriminalizing homosexuality on the legal surface, there is ongoing discrimination against minority folks within the LGBTQ+ community. For example, Canada is considered to have decriminalized homosexuality in 1969 with the passage of Bill C-150 (Khan, 2020). However, this legislation had several limitations. The bill only applied to sex in private between two adults, and anal sex remained in the Criminal Code with more stringent rules than vaginal sex (Khan, 2020). Hence, a law that purportedly marked the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada de facto continued stigmatizing certain expressions and behaviors of gay people, polyamorous relationships, and gay men in particular.

The push for the legalization of same-sex marriage introduces another complex issue. While many view it as a victory for the queer community, some argue that its success in certain countries has come at the expense of those who do not conform to traditional marriage norms (Khan, 2020; Agathangelou et al., 2008). These individuals have been marginalized not only by the dominant heterosexual and cisgender structures but also by the queer community, which aligned with the dominant structures and reinforced and normalized marriage as the ideal form of kinship. In speaking of the mainstream LGBTQ+ rights movement, Khan (2020) noted that it “normalizes same-sex desire, in part, by aligning it with the ‘normal’ desire to marry and have children” (p. 302). She further explains that stereotypes that gay men are a danger to children—which can be recalled as one of the reasons for the historically targeted enforcement of sodomy laws against gay people—have been reversed by illustrating gay couples as monogamous and good parents.

In addition, some queer people have also gained acceptance by the dominant culture “through the displacement and explicit effacement of racial, sexual, and class antagonisms and inequities” (Agathangelou, 2008, p. 125). By removing any images associated with other minority groups, such as racial/ethnic minorities, gender minorities, the lower class, and immigrants, some queer individuals could garner more support and empathy from the hegemony. For instance, advertisements that paint a picture of a patriot, middle-class, white, businessman who has lost his loved one due to a foreign enemy produces a fixed image of a good gay citizen, gaining support from a more conservative population (Agathangelou, 2008). Thus, while aligning with the dominant kinship form, race/ethnicity, gender, class, and other identities have contributed to legalizing same-sex marriage, it has also furthered the marginalization of other queer identities.

These arguments evoke Derrick Bell’s (1992) interest convergence theory, which claims that white people will only mobilize resources to realize minori-

ty groups' interests when their own interests are also of concern. The concept of interest convergence is relevant to conflicts with any minority groups. In this instance, some members of the LGBTQ+ community could finally obtain some rights because their interests matched, or at least did not conflict with, the interests of the heterosexual and cisgender structures. However, through approaches that uphold and reinforce the normalization of the dominant narratives, whatever rights secured for some members of the LGBTQ+ community come at the expense of bodies that intersect with other subordinate identities and do not fit the norms of monogamy. These bodies are often pressured into silence, judged, and invalidated (e.g., Carlstrom & Andersson, 2019; Hayfield, 2020; McConnell et al., 2018).

In this way, a close analysis from the inside reveals various biopolitical concerns. Most arguments against homosexuality are persistently framed around religious and moral grounds. Claims that homosexuality is indecent and corrupts public morals are unfortunately not uncommon. However, the judgment and enforcement of what bodies are decent, desirable, and morally acceptable are not randomly practiced. Controlling gay bodies by rendering them docile and restricting their population through deprivation of resources were beneficial and necessary to maintain the dominant structures led primarily by white, heterosexual, cisgender, conservative men. Members within the LGBTQ+ community who abided by the governing norms were more accepted, while those who did not remain marginalized and invisible.

## **Criminalization of Sex Work**

### *History of Criminalization*

Perhaps because they are both framed around the culture of sex, homosexuality and prostitution have both historically been branded immoral vices and criminalized. However, unlike homosexuality, which has gained more overall social acceptance over the years, prostitution has largely remained unacceptable and stigmatized (Khan, 2020). Why homosexuality and prostitution took a different trajectory may be partially explained by the interest convergence theory. Just like certain members of the LGBTQ+ community have been excluded from the benefits gained through their movement, sex workers have also been ostracized from the discourse because sex work could not publicly align with the interests of the dominant class. Although one could argue that the emergence and proliferation of prostitution are related to the emancipation of capitalism and commodification of the human body, thus reflecting the dominant narrative, recognizing and accepting sex work as a legitimate market threatened the "morals" of society, making it more challenging to

build any alliances with the dominant class. Furthermore, as prostitution is associated with poverty, disease, and promiscuity, sex workers have constantly been placed in opposition to mainstream society and its values (Khan, 2020).

Similar to the patterns observed with homosexuality, this form of prostitution criminalization has not always been the case. The state did not target prostitution nor solicitation for prostitution as an independent offense. Until the nineteenth century, sex workers were arrested primarily through public nuisance laws, but the state used to be more legally tolerant of the sex industry and workers (Lucas, 1995). In general, prostitution was dealt with as a *mala prohibita* act; while not entirely free of repercussions, it was not extensively criminalized.

It was during the Progressive Era that the criminalization of prostitution advanced, as the cause of all female criminality was attributed to sexual deviance (Lucas, 1995). Sex workers were perceived as females who had “fallen from virtue” and had no way back (p.51). They deviated from the norms of “natural” female behaviors and roles and, thus, were regarded as irredeemable. Moreover, while capitalist industrialization and urbanization brought many social changes, challenging conventional social norms involving family structures, female roles, and community cohesion, the sex industry symbolized all such evils (Lucas, 1995). Sex work represented the commodification of the body, female independence, and the decline of informal social control in communities, threatening the dominant structure of the time.

Generally, the laws targeting sex workers were more concerned about what prostitution symbolically represented than the acts of prostitution itself. Sex work was linked to the demises of norms and blamed for rising divorce rates, females working in public, and feminist political and social movements (Lucas, 1995). Consequently, criminalizing prostitution by framing it as a *mala in se* act was an attempt to maintain society’s hegemonic values of monogamy, kinship, and chastity. Since the expansion of industrialization and urbanization in the U.S. had begun to change the former place of females, the state had a strong interest in managing the female body.

In addition to controlling the female body, the criminalization of prostitution also fulfilled another purpose. Prostitution had become increasingly associated with venereal diseases, posing a public health concern. According to Poovey (1990), “in transforming a natural sexual exchange into an assault upon public health, syphilis turns prostitution into a crime” (p. 36). In a state where the fostering of life is primarily concerned, prostitution threatened the population regulatory systems and called for enhanced surveillance and regulation of matters associated with sex work. To protect social morals, the state was invested in disciplining the sex worker body, especially that of females.

*Impacts of Criminalization*

The criminalization of prostitution can take various forms, which can be organized mainly into three categories based on whom the intended target is. Full criminalization targets all parties involved, including those who sell, purchase, and organize or mediate sexual transactions. In contrast, the other two categories refer to partial criminalization because they either target the sex workers or the clients and third parties involved. Regardless of its form, all types of criminalization have negatively affected sex workers.

From a public health and individual well-being perspective, multiple research studies have reported that criminalization increases sex workers' risks of HIV/STI infection (e.g., Anderson et al., 2016; McBride et al., 2021). For example, a study in East Java, Indonesia, found that criminalization increased STI infections among female sex workers by 58 percent (Cameron et al., 2020). Sex workers' increased vulnerability is partly due to the criminal justice system using possession of condoms as evidence that a person intends to engage in prostitution. As a result of such practices, many sex workers fear carrying condoms and sometimes have to engage in unprotected sex (Human Rights Watch, 2012; Open Society Foundations, 2012). In addition to increased risks of contracting HIV/STI, sex workers are also limited in their ability to access healthcare. Sex workers' displacement due to policing causes interruptions to their HIV treatments (Goldenberg et al., 2017). They may also face discrimination from healthcare providers due to the stigma promulgated by criminalization (Lazarus et al., 2012). Like the case of gay people, criminalizing sex work prevents at risk populations from consistently accessing healthcare services.

Another issue facing sex workers is physical, sexual, and emotional violence. According to Deering et al. (2014), the lifetime prevalence of violence for sex workers ranges from 45 percent to 75 percent, which is disturbingly high. They also found that lawful and unlawful policing practices were associated with elevated risks of violence, indicating the vulnerabilities caused by criminalization. Where prostitution is criminalized, sex workers often have to move to more isolated spaces to avoid police surveillance, increasing their vulnerability to being assaulted by their clients or pimps. Criminal justice agents, such as police officers, also perpetrate violence against sex workers. In a study conducted with drug-using female sex workers, close to one-third reported that the police had requested free sexual services, and 17 percent reported that the police had sexually abused them (Strathdee et al., 2011). Criminalization of any form gives discretionary power to law enforcement, which may lead to some corrupt officers abusing their power over life.

While these issues seem to be most relevant to full and partial criminaliza-

tion targeting sex workers, even the type of criminalization that targets clients and third parties can cause both symbolic and pragmatic harm to the sex workers. Firstly, most arguments supporting partial criminalization are built on the concept that sex workers are victims. This view ignores sex workers' agency and self-determination ability, denying their dignity and personal autonomy over their bodies and lives (Amnesty International, 2018). While many human trafficking victims are forced to engage in sex work and are sexually exploited, not all sex workers are human trafficking victims. Conflating human trafficking with sex work is problematic as it denies many sex workers' agency.

Secondly, partial criminalization disregards sex workers' capacity and power to navigate the system. According to Thusi (2018), "sex workers manage risks and have made a calculated choice to adopt a profession within their existing economic paradigm" (p. 213). Treating them as helpless victims can lead to imposing ethnocentric and aggressive mandatory rehabilitation interventions or exit programs regardless of their will (Amnesty International, 2018; Khan, 2020). According to the Empower Foundation (2012), a common theme of so-called "raid and rescue" operations in Thailand is that they are often traumatizing; sex workers are detained in shelters for months against their will, unable to leave, unable to contact their family members, forced to join education and work activities often without any compensations, and denied appropriate healthcare. Sex worker bodies are regulated by the state under the premise of anti-trafficking.

Lastly, partial criminalization disrupts the carefully constructed systems that sex workers navigate, inadvertently putting them in more danger. As it is difficult to regulate the act of prostitution itself, many states regulate activities that are related to sex work, such as soliciting or brothel-keeping. These regulations eliminate the support functions that can essentially keep sex workers safe (Amnesty International, 2018) because now the sex workers have to do their work alone and in less secure spaces. They also must take greater risks in their interactions with their clients, such as concluding negotiations quickly or in secluded places and engaging with more dangerous clients (Amnesty International, 2018). To illustrate this issue, Thusi (2018) found that the police began to target clients as part of a recognition of the sex workers' rights, but as a result, the dynamics of the local market changed for the worse. Her study showed that the police increasingly began to extort the clients, and the sex workers were more concerned about losing their income sources and not being assisted by the police when victimized.

Besides the overall impacts of criminalization on sex workers, it is essential to note that this approach has impacted certain bodies more than others.

The stereotypical image of a sex worker is that of a street prostitute, even though only a small percentage of those who engage in prostitution work on the streets (Lucas, 1995). Based on this stereotypical image and due to the relative easiness of regulating the bodies on the streets, typical policies usually target street prostitutes, who are predominantly poor women and women of color (Lucas, 1995). As a result, BIPOC women are disproportionately more likely to be arrested and convicted for prostitution-related offenses (Decriminalize Sex Work, 2022). Those on the streets are more likely to be resource-poor and thus more severely and acutely impacted by criminalization (Amnesty International, 2018), while those with more access to resources remain hidden from public scrutiny.

In this way, sex workers have been subject to biopower. Sometimes they are treated as active agents in corrupting public morals, justifying the state's interest and interventions to restrict their bodies. While other times, they are depicted as helpless victims who cannot make decisions for themselves, needing to be rescued and managed. These contradicting double stigmas attached to prostitution have restricted sex workers' access to socioeconomic resources, including healthcare and other means of upward mobility. Restrictions from criminalization have regulated their bodies and managed the broad population into following the hegemonic norms. Bodies simultaneously belonging to other marginalized groups are controlled to an even greater extent, reinforcing the existing dominant structures.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The culture of sex in Western societies is usually considered a part of one's personal life. However, such a supposedly private matter has become subject to control by the nation-state. Some societies have taken extra steps to ensure that bodies that do not fit the hegemonic sex culture are strictly regulated. Albeit not the only one, the criminal justice system has served as one of the primary surveillants and enforcers of control. The primary goals of this paper were to examine the criminalization of sex through a Foucauldian view of biopower and to shed light on its consequences on sexually marginalized groups.

Foucault explains the nation-state's intervention in sex by demonstrating that sex meets two forms of biopower. The governmental interest in disciplining the body is reflected in attempts to render gay and sex worker bodies docile. By framing homosexuality and prostitution as moral issues, "crimes against nature," or *mala in se*, these bodies have been socially, economically, and politically marginalized. They have been forced to flee and hide from



their residential communities, faced restricted access and unstable conditions to provide financial support for themselves and their families, and had their ability to make choices and take actions disregarded and undermined. Moreover, the system's interest in regulating the population has also played a role. It maintained the dominant groups' norms by restricting gay and sex worker bodies' access to resources and fundamental rights. These bodies have been denied access to healthcare and reproduction. Ultimately, they have been killed by the criminal justice system and ignored when harmed by people who are part of a social system that normalizes the dominant structures and violence against those who do not fit in.

In addition, even when decriminalization seemed to be achieved or when the human rights of these bodies were at least partially recognized, discrimination against gay and sex worker bodies has continued through normalized and covert criminalization. Although the legalization of same-sex marriage symbolized a victory for the LGBTQ+ community and systematic inclusiveness, this right was achieved at the expense of other groups within the queer community. Some LGBTQ+ members gained more social acceptance by aligning with the dominant norms in kinship, race, class, and nationality, among other forms of identity. However, other individuals marginalized in multiple dimensions have become subject to even more control. Furthermore, those from the sex work community have not been as successful in gaining social acceptance as the gay community. Sex workers remain largely stigmatized and criminalized. The state even more intensely restricts the bodies of people of color and those with fewer resources. It is imperative to recognize that criminalization is so deeply entrenched in every institution of our society and intertwined with other structures of power that it is difficult to resist its negative consequences while completely ignoring the existing dominant structures, especially since this type of criminalization has occurred within a moral framework.

Although these arguments would benefit from more research on the consequences of criminalization, analyzing the existing literature has demonstrated that the criminalization of sex has severely affected sexually marginalized groups, particularly those in the most precarious positions. Instead of exercising the right of death or the power to disallow life through criminalization, the criminal justice system needs to begin exploring more alternatives that would achieve the goal of fostering the life of all groups and communities. Research must accompany the efforts to adopt alternative policies to ensure that new approaches are not unexpectedly causing harm to groups traditionally underrepresented and oppressed by the system.

Because power is indeed all-pervasive and normalized in multiple insti-

tutions, as Foucault claims, changing the criminal justice system to become more considerate of sexually marginalized groups may not be the panacea for all discrimination in our society. However, careful decriminalization of the sex culture can be the first step to forming a new discourse, which would undoubtedly influence other institutions and contribute to improving the living conditions of minority groups. Although this paper has focused on the detrimental consequences of power through criminalization, power is not all negative and repressive. Just like it has the right to death and the power to disallow life, the criminal justice system also possesses the power to foster life. Therefore, its approach moving forward is to ensure it fosters all types of lives by mindfully acknowledging its historical path of oppression, being internally critical of its missions and practices, and continually and effectively evaluating policies and efforts.

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# The Impacts and Necessity of Art Education

**Genna Ohrenberg**

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## *Abstract*

Art education is a topic consistently deemed unnecessary by educators, parents, and administrators. Art education is, however, important and necessary for childhood development, and self-growth for future students, current students, and the growing members of society. Through looking at writings, quantitative research studies, and data researched by other educators it is obvious that many people understand the importance of art education. Together, these show the different impacts that art has on the lives of both children and adults. Overall, art education is absolutely necessary in all classrooms and in the lives of people, as it provides mental stimulation, self-development, a higher quality of life, and academic achievement. Research continues to show the many benefits of art education and why it is necessary in today's classrooms.

*Keywords:* art education, academic achievement, brain development, self-esteem



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As my time as a future art educator continues, a theme that often shows itself is the idea that art education is not necessary in classrooms and is not necessary for a child to have. This paper discusses the different benefits and positive outcomes of art education and the place it has in classrooms and the lives of students. Art education should be implemented throughout a child's life to create a positive school environment and to propel students' emotional and physiological growth. Art education improves self-esteem, interest in classes, academic achievement, and brain development (Kisida & Bowen, 2022). Overall, art should be emphasized and funded in education due to its many benefits throughout all grade levels and adult life.

The benefits of art education echo throughout Ruth Dower's *Creativity and the Arts in Early Childhood: Supporting Young Children's Development and Well-being*, where she discusses some of the struggles students whose first language is not English face in the classroom when communicating with teachers and peers. Some of these challenges include students not understanding verbal instructions given by the teacher or not fully grasping concepts due to wordy PowerPoint lessons, both of which cause difficulty in understanding and retaining information. Dower also writes that students who are not successful in communicating verbally are seen as "bad" students. This can be resolved by using art as a communication tool in the classroom, which Dower states can help students communicate complex topics, build confidence, build relationships, and express themselves (Dower, 2020). Dower expands on this idea by stating that she has never seen art get in the way of a student's learning and possibilities, but she has seen art give students passion and excitement. Other benefits of art that Dower discusses includes improving student development, allowing students to communicate and express their feelings in nonverbal ways, and helping students develop qualities such as love, self-expression, and independence. Dower shows a table of the traditional hierarchy of scientific disciplines, which puts the arts in the silver standard with social sciences, stating that this is not a valid ranking of the scientific disciplines as social sciences and humanities play an important role in young people's understanding of the world (Dower, 2020, p. 57). As well, the visual arts give them knowledge of attributes they share with others and helps them develop a critical awareness of society. Overall, Dower understands the importance of art education and creativity and the physical and mental benefits that come from the arts.

Tanya Scott, a secondary art educator with a Master of Arts in Teaching, and Todd Twyman, an associate professor at Pacific University with a PhD in Education and Leadership, discuss the possibilities and benefits of art education and the integration of art with other areas of study. Scott and Twyman

write about the connections between art and subjects such as science, mathematics, and history, saying “after completing a course in geology, I took an upper-level ceramics course that emphasized clay bodies and glaze mixing. Ceramics materials have origins from the earth, and I had studied their origins, properties, extraction methods, and refining processes in geology.” This not only gives a ceramics piece deeper meaning, but it also creates a connection between geology and art, which proves the benefits of art education (Scott & Twyman, 2018, p. 16).

There is some overlap with history and art throughout education because the origins of art, such as who created the different styles, movements, and materials, are important. By integrating this information between classes, the depth of knowledge in the student’s other subjects can be deepened. This concept brings up the question of if there is a need for art-specific classrooms and instructors throughout the K-12 system. Scott and Twyman speak about this by stating that the separation of art classrooms and other curricula is necessary because, if they were not separate, it would limit what the students are learning and achieving as non-art teachers in schools are not certified to teach art. The authors also explain how art can apply meaning to life experiences, improve attitudes about school, and have a positive impact on students’ social and cultural understanding (Scott & Twyman, 2018). This also challenges the practice of standardized testing to determine a student’s success, as art can facilitate understanding through other subjects. These ideas give art a deeper meaning and a valid reason to be prevalent in schools.

The physical benefits of art education on academic achievement are important and show that the arts improve the overall school setting when systematically implemented. One of the main issues Kisida and Bowen discuss is when school districts reduce funding to art programs, they see a corresponding reduction to the student’s academic achievement and success. Every student should be able to express their thoughts and communicate their ideas through art regardless of their background or financial situations, but low-income neighborhoods usually have underfunded schools and art programs, which hurts the schools as the low-income students who attend these schools need a place to express their feelings and the things they are going through. Kisida and Bowen conducted a study regarding how the funding of the arts affects students’ academic success and personal development. This study was conducted on 42 elementary and middle schools and over 10,000 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders. These schools received a large sum of money to put toward their arts programs and, on average, about 10 enriching arts educational experiences which took place both before and after school. The results of the study showed a 3.6 percent reduction in disciplinary actions, a 13 percent im-

provement in standardized writing scores, and an 8 percent increase in their compassion for others (Kisida & Bowen, 2022). The study also showed that the arts improved student engagement, college aspirations, and their desire to make others feel better (Kisida & Bowen, 2022). This proves that arts and art education can improve academic and social development, meaning that educators should not only continue art education in the classrooms but also make sure that it is well funded.

If art education is underfunded, then there will be limited learning opportunities for students who want to continue growing in their art skills and who will use these skills for future careers. Limiting art educational experiences implies that students who are in math, science, or social studies do not need civil and human social knowledge. The denial of art education could hurt students by implying that they are not important or cared for and that some disciplines are more important than others. By funding all programs, including the arts, then all students will be more successful in their studies and passions, and they will feel like a priority. In another sense, art, in general, is an important part of history and deeply influences and reflects the social settings in which the art is made. Educators must talk about art and the growth of art to provide students with a full, well-rounded education. All of this is yet another reason that continuing and increasing the funding of art education is important.

In a broader sense, art has many beneficial elements outside of education. As written in *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers* by Richard and Willis, art has been used with dementia patients to help improve their quality of life by giving them an outlet for their creativity, as well as something to do every day. According to Richards and Willis, art had the biggest impact on cognition when used as a tool for learning (Richard & Willis, 2020). Christianson-Tietzen explores the cognitive, physical, and social impact on the quality of life for these dementia patients. Another study regarding this topic, *Visual arts education improves self-esteem for persons with dementia and reduces caregiver burden: A randomized controlled trial* by Richards and Tietzen (2012) examines how the arts can improve the quality of life and self-esteem of people with dementia and their caregivers. Neuroimaging studies also identify that certain art skills develop and enhance sensory, motor, attention, emotional, and language processes. These studies show an increase in neural matter in different parts of the brain, which proves that art improves quality of life both physically and emotionally.

Students frequently dislike being in school due to the feeling that they are not good enough. Art classes provide an avenue for students to express themselves and achieve success, because, while there are techniques or general

ways to complete a piece of art, it is not like other subjects where there is only one answer. Art develops individuality through artwork, and for students who struggle with core classes, art gives them hope, a way to boost self-esteem, and improves their feelings about school. If the only class a student feels good at is removed from their school, then they may not feel a want or need to be at school, which affects academic achievement and the student's future.

Guetzkow (2002) adds to the importance of art education by discussing how art could strengthen societies and create a positive environment of interdependence and harmony, while also creating new relationships and strengthening love and trust between members of society. He also details how art plays a role in deepening the senses for beauty and self-esteem as well as supporting economic growth by creating jobs, reducing unemployment, and increasing tourism, which aids low-income communities with underfunded schools. Guetzkow then states that art has three major influences: physiological, social, and cultural importance, all of which benefit students and the community, which in turn educates students more about how the arts can help the school and increase funding.

Dr. Christine Challen (2021), who has been an educator in both higher education and secondary education, discusses how art education is important in creating future leaders, how it contributes to a good leader, and the use of art to enhance cognition toward more critical thinking. She also states the importance of integrating art into science, technical engineering, and math because artists can have multiple interests or jobs. Da Vinci, for example, was a philosopher, scientist, and artist. His early sketches showed medical investigations drawn in a way that showed the beauty of the human body. Another example is in early photography, as artists and scientists took pictures of foliage and flowers, which was helpful for agriculture. This demonstrates that people can use art to depict new things and forms in other subjects, making art just as important as other academic disciplines.

It is important to note that authors before 1980 and their viewpoints on art education were beneficial in the classroom. York used information from Bauhaus' educational principles, which states that the objectives of art education are "...to keep alive in adults the child's sincerity of emotion, his truth of the observation, his fantasy, and creativeness." (York, 1964, p.25). York also writes about how, at this time, they had the principles of John Dewey and progressive education encouraging the integration of art into other curricula, which makes it seem that the goals and ideas of education in 1920 are still prominent today. Also, York writes about drawing and art as a method to relax and create a rest period in schools, as it was not very common for art to be a constant class (York, 1964). This is still the case in contemporary educa-

tion, that, though art can be stressful, it provides a place to relax and let go of what is going on in life. Additionally, art is one of the few subjects that can be adjusted to allow all students to be part of the class. Students with different needs, such as blindness, hearing impairment, or trouble communicating, can still participate in art projects and the classroom. This creates a place for students with different needs to pave their own path and create art using their senses, while also having social interaction with other students. This is important for some students as this may be the only class they can relax or feel capable in.

Overall, it is understandable why individuals may have concerns about the importance of art education in a classroom setting, but when looking at art in and out of schools, it is easy to see the benefits it has on students in the minority, such as English Language Learners and disabled students, as well as improving the academic achievement, future success, and overall wellbeing of students. Students deserve a place in school to feel validated, successful, and to grow as individuals in a community. Educators are creating future leaders and should do whatever it takes to help facilitate growth, and art should not be overlooked as a method to create a safe space for students to grow.

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# The State That Never Was: Modern Prospects for an Independent Kurdistan

**Kayla Thayer**

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## *Abstract*

Kurdish nationalism has been a source of fraught debate in international politics. The politics of a Kurdish state remains highly contentious due to the wide assortment of nation-states involved in what is commonly known as the “Kurdish question.” From Shaykh ‘Ubaydullah’s invasion of Persia in 1880 to the 2017 Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government’s referendum on independence, Kurds have asserted themselves as the largest national group without a state. This analysis discusses the history of Kurdish nationalism, as well as the obstacles faced by modern Kurdish state-builders. As it stands, the prospects for an independent Kurdish state are dismal. A combination of geography, poor governance, and great power politics has made the Kurdish question a contentious, and seemingly unsolvable, problem. This analysis will assess the feasibility of an independent Kurdish state by examining Kurdish and Middle Eastern history, modern geopolitical conflicts, and the conditions in which a Kurdish state might emerge. The population of approximately 30 million Kurds live divided between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Despite their common ethnicity and the seemingly arbitrary colonial borders of the Middle East, the Kurds of each country have faced unique struggles in their quest for an independent Kurdish state.

*Keywords:* state-building, Kurdistan, Kurdish nationalism, secessionism, KRG, PYD, PKK, international relations, state repression, Middle East



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## Introduction

To analyze why Kurdish history in the Middle Eastern region has been difficult, three influences must be addressed. First, the struggle of the Kurdish people has always been colored by their more powerful neighbors. Their geographic location has placed them at a crossroads between powerful empires and states. Second, the foreign powers that the Kurdish people live under have, in most cases, embarked on campaigns of repression and ethnic cleansing (McDowell, 2021, p. 213). Finally, the Kurds are a diverse and historically divided people. Their internal divisions, often stoked by states seeking to undermine their neighbors, have not aided the Kurds in their quest for an independent state.

*Pictured below is a map of the Kurdish-inhabited area:*



**Figure 1.** United States Central Intelligence Agency. (2002) Kurdish-Inhabited Area U. [Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency] [Map] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2008624764/>

## Emerging Kurdish Nationalism

### *Pan Kurdish Prospects*

There was a time when a pan-Kurdish state may have been possible.

Unfortunately, this opportunity came too early for Kurdish nationalist sentiments. The Treaty of Sèvres, a brief promise by the British in 1920 that established a future Kurdish state (The Economist, 2021), was forgotten when the Treaty of Lausanne replaced it three years later. There were certainly advocates of a Kurdish state, but it was not a unanimous will. Some Kurds sought to be incorporated into other emerging states and many were hesitant to commit themselves fully to only one option (McDowell, 2021, p. 139). During the early 1900s, the Middle East was undergoing a transformation in governance and state power. For Turkey, this was the transition from the Ottoman Empire to a nationalist, secular, and modern state (Ünlü, 2016, p. 397-405). Iran, under a modernizing and secular ruler in the aftermath of the Qajar dynasty Reza Shah Pahlavi, was set on centralization and the disarmament of Kurdish tribes (Arfa, 2023; McDowell, 2021, p. 230). In Iraq, Amir Faisal was soon to be elected as leader with a questionable 96% vote, while Faisal was sponsored by the British as the monarch of Mandatory Iraq (Chambers, 2023). The challenge of this newly formed state was the fusing of three Ottoman-era cantons—Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra (Chambers, 2023), these three cantons were predominantly Kurdish, Sunni, and Shi'a, respectively. King Faisal's primary concern was the Sunni-Shi'a balance. Seeking to avoid a dominant Shi'a population, he resolved to prevent a coalition of Kurdish tribes from seceding. Finally, in the case of Syria, colonial divisions created by French rule, the denial of Kurdish citizenship, and the anti-Kurdish sentiment produced by Arab nationalism ensured the disenfranchisement of Syrian Kurds (McDowell, 2021, p. 469). In any case, the Kurds found themselves divided between four emerging states with good reason to fear a united Kurdistan.

### *Death of the Sèvres*

During the Sèvres period, the Kurds might have stood a much better chance at securing an independent state had they been united in their position. Kurdish state-building prospects were dashed by internal and external forces. Internally, there was not a strong enough Kurdish nationalist identity to unify under a Kurdish state. This analysis utilizes Benedict Anderson's definition of nationalism as, "a connection based on language, territory, culture, national consciousness and a sense of partnership with people with whom one does not even come into contact" (Bashir and Farsakh, 2022, p. 251). During the critical period of state building in the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish nationalist ideas were often a tool for feudal, self-interested tribal leaders (McDowell, 2021, p. 148).

Externally, the Treaty of Sèvres was deemed illegitimate, as the soon-to-be

deposed ruler Grand Vizier Farid Pasha's endorsement was dead on arrival (McDowell, 2021, p. 106). The reason for this preemptive failure is beyond the purview of this analysis. At the risk of oversimplifying the course of events, the essential reason the Treaty of Sèvres failed is because Mustafa Kemal Attaturk had more de facto legitimacy to make Turkish foreign policy decisions and would soon gain de jure authority over Turkey. McDowell argues that, whereas the Greeks, Armenians, and Serbs were rallying for statehood, the Turkish and Kurdish Muslim umma were contented to unite against Christian encroachment under the carcass of the Ottoman Empire (2021, p. 108). As Kurds developed a sense of ethnic identity, they did not necessarily mean to separate from the crumbling Ottoman Empire. The initial support they received from Britain was shown to be fickle.

When the Treaty of Sèvres was officially laid to rest by the Treaty of Lausanne, a precedent was set for future Kurdish independence prospects (The Economist, 2021). This was the most crucial moment for a modern Kurdish state. The early twentieth century was an age for modern statehood in the Middle East. Britain and France were busy redrawing the map to make room for Iraq and Syria, which bit off another chunk of a pan-Kurdish state. Because a Kurdish state was not advantageous to the great powers in the 1920s, the Kurds were destined to fight an uphill battle. When the dust settled, the Kurds were divided between four states and the fight for an independent state began.

### *State Repression*

Though Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria achieved independence on different dates, they all moved quickly to suppress their restive Kurdish population. The common thread of these four states' development was their insecurity in national identity. As the states established their borders, they were loath to concede land that could create a potential enemy. Some states were able to harness nationalism in the face of ethnic diversity as a social glue for their legitimacy. In the case of Turkey, the Turkish identity left no room for the Kurds. This, however, did not prevent the state from weaponizing its neighbor's Kurdish population as needed. All four states aided insurgent groups to undermine their enemies (Gunter, 2013, p. 451). To repress their own Kurdish population, states manipulated tribal patronage systems within their borders in a divide-and-conquer manner (McDowell, 2021, p. 213). For as long as there was no significant unity between Kurdish tribes, states could choose to co-opt tribes to repress other dissenting tribes without needing to directly engage in military or police action.

Turkey has always been the prime example of state repression of the Kurds.

This includes the denial of the Kurdish language, the Kurdish administration, and a general refusal to recognize the Kurdish people. An example of this is Turkey's historic refusal to acknowledge its Kurdish population, instead calling the Kurds "Mountain Turks" (McDowell, 2021, p. 217). Turkey is a striking example of the juxtaposition between their alleged commitment to democracy (through a European state model) and the violent repression of their Kurdish population. As Turkey attempted to join the European Union (EU) in 1987, the EU mandated reforms in the way in which Turkey governed their Kurdish population (McDowell, 2021, p. 443). As it turns out, Turkey has chosen the suppression of their Kurdish population over admittance to the EU (McDowell, 2021, p. 570). This suppression has consistently crushed Kurdish demands for recognition and autonomy, while also providing martyrs for insurgent groups.

## Modern Prospects

### *Iraq*

The prospects for a modern independent Kurdish state briefly appeared to be a possibility in Iraqi Kurdistan. In the aftermath of Iraq's 1988 genocidal al-Anfal campaign that destroyed over 2,000 Kurdish villages and killed tens of thousands of Kurds, the United States initiated Operation Provide Comfort (Black, 1993). This operation created a no-fly zone in Iraqi Kurdistan that aided Kurds in the establishment of a functional state that outpaced its southern Iraqi neighbor in development (Haulman, 2012; see also McDowell, 2021, p. 369). During this period of development, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of the Barzani family and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of the Talabani family have fiercely opposed each other. This opposition included a civil war from 1994-1997 that resulted in the Washington Agreement that established the KDP and PUK coalition government (McConville, 2022, p. 87). This uneasy alliance has proven to exacerbate tribalism and patronage systems. While both parties seek to undermine each other through patronage systems and corruption, they undermine the legitimacy of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and prevent the development of a functional democratic state. This is evident in political appointments in the KRG. KDP and PUK leaders will appoint family members to key positions like prime minister, head of security services, and other entities like media and newspapers (McDowell, 2021, p. 615).

Following the 2003 Iraq War, Jalal Talabani and his advisors handily secured significant autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan in the drafting of the 2005 Iraq Constitution (Arato, 2009, p. 144). The level of legitimate independence

the KRG operated at was unprecedented and provided hope for a potential Kurdish state. This all culminated in 2017 when Masoud Barzani held a referendum on independence. With a 90 percent vote in favor of Kurdish independence, the KRG opened the floodgates to foreign condemnation (The Economist, 2021). Because the referendum included important disputed territories, including the oil-rich Kirkuk, Iraqi forces and Iran-backed Shiite militias immediately launched an assault on the contested areas (Hama, 2021, p. 222). This show of force demonstrated the unlikely prospects of an independent Kurdish state emerging from Iraqi Kurdistan.

### *Syria*

Following the 2011 Syrian Civil War, an unlikely offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) established a de facto autonomous zone, Rojava (Jongerden, 2021). This group, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), proved to be a valuable ally to the United States (Michnik and Plakoudas, 2022, p. 57). Because the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) demonstrated their military competency in the struggle against the Islamic State, the SDF received United States air support and protection (Plakoudas and Michnik, 2021). This unlikely ally to the PYD allowed Syrian Kurds to enact Abdulla Öcalan's radically left philosophy in the establishment of what he called "democratic confederalism" (Gerber and Brincat, 2021, p. 975). This form of "bottom-up" governance provided hope for an eventual democratic Kurdish state.

This unlikely emergence of an independent Syrian Kurdistan proved to fall short of true statehood. While the United States provided military legitimacy, Rojava was able to fend off a Turkish incursion. Following the United States' abrupt withdrawal from the region, Turkey has made significant territorial advancements (Michnik and Plakoudas, 2022, p. 63). Furthermore, the once fragile rule of Syrian president and dictator, Bashar al-Assad, appears likely to survive (McDowell, 2021, p. 518). An Independent Syrian Kurdistan has returned to an infeasible dream.

### *Turkey*

Turkey is well known for its long history of cognitive dissonance relating to their Kurdish population. This lack of acknowledgement, as well as their violent repression incites violent Kurdish retribution, as the PKK has demonstrated. Despite the PKK's violent rhetoric and authoritarian method of ideological enforcement, there has been no significant progress towards a Kurdish state in Turkey. Interestingly, as the PKK lobbies for political recognition, a newer generation briefly filled the role of the violent insurgents, the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) (Bozarslan, 2015). Members of the YDG-H have stated that the PKK does not have direct power over

them (Pamuk, 2015). The degree of their independence is still disputed, but criticism from Ankara has further damaged the prospects of PKK political recognition and more broadly, Kurdish human rights. Presently, the YDG-H is largely irrelevant insofar as they might influence the Turkish policy towards Kurds. Their connection to the PKK however, may have lasting consequences for Kurds' ability to attain political legitimacy and recognition in Turkey.

Kurdish sovereignty is made more difficult by Turkey's continued democratic backsliding. As Erdogan continues to consolidate power, he has eschewed the "Kurdish peace" (Salt, 2016, p. 129). This renewed war with the PKK will inevitably cost more lives and further undermine the likelihood of a Kurdish state in Turkey.

### *Iran*

Iran historically has a grim history regarding Kurdish human rights. Their modern performance has not deviated in any significant manner. Interestingly, Iran's Kurds declared an independent state in January 1946: the Republic of Mahabad (Nada & Crahan, 2021). Unfortunately, the USSR backed state fell within less than a year. This state began greatly divided and did not improve from there. The Soviet sponsorship provided temporary legitimacy, but the ministate was wholly dependent upon Soviet sponsorship for protection against hostile neighbors. Once the Soviets withdrew their support, it was a downward tumble that ended in the hanging of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan's (PDKI) founder Ghazi Muhammed (McDowell, 2021, p. 252).

Today, the U.S. Department of State reports that, "the government continued to use the law to arrest and prosecute Kurds for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association" (2019). In the face of State repression, the Kurds persist in opposition groups, like the banned PDKI (Caldera, 2020). The PDKI was founded by Ghazi Muhammed and is one of the oldest Kurdish opposition groups (Nada & Crahan, 2021). After the 1979 Revolution, calls for Kurdish autonomy were denied, despite PDKI participation in the overthrow of the Shah. Unfortunately, the Shah's successor, Ayatollah Khomeini declared the PDKI the "party of Satan" (Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, 2012). Mustafa Hijri, the current leader of the PDKI has called for a federal democracy in Iran. This stance, notably, does not call for separation from Iran to establish an independent Kurdish state.

For many years, the Kurds in Iran were sidelined as Iraqi and Syrian Kurds represented possibilities for Kurdish autonomy. Iranian suppression of Kurdish movements ensured that the ethnic minority could not form coalitions with other minority groups. This has changed as Iran faces its largest

civil unrest since the 1979 Revolution (Romano, 2022). A Kurdish woman, Zhina Amini was arrested and killed by Iranian morality police for an improperly worn hijab (Washington Kurdish Institute, 2022). This state killing of a Kurdish woman sparked nationwide protests. The united response of the Iranian people presents the slim possibility of a regime overthrow, and potentially the emergence of a Kurdish state. Although this is an attractive idea, Hijri has advocated peaceful protest and has made no move to use the protests to shore up a Kurdish state (Romano, 2022). Hijri's concern is one of prudence. If the Iranian regime can isolate Kurdish protesters as secessionists, it can delegitimize the grievances of the wider protests.

If Hijri attempted to use the current unrest in Iran to declare a Kurdish state, the Iranian state would likely act in swift retribution, as they have been apt to do (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Furthermore, neighboring Arab states, as well as great powers such as the United States, have emphatically denounced a Kurdish state. The reason for the United States' reticence is essentially a desire for stability. Save for major events like the aftermath of World War I and World War II, the United States generally does not support secessionist movements or the creation of new countries (Rubin, 2020, p. 34). This can be attributed to multiple international relations theories. Primarily, realism suggests the state is the only relevant actor in international relations and the recognition of non-state actors is generally very taboo in international diplomacy. Secondly, it would be an enormous expenditure of political capital to sponsor a Kurdish state in direct opposition to four countries. Even if a Kurdish state was sponsored within the borders of one state, the fear of a slippery slope effect renders a Kurdish state anywhere a threat to the collective of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. With these perspectives in mind, there is no reason to believe that the declaration of an Iranian Kurdish state would be well received, as shown by the 2017 KRG referendum.

## **Kurdish Statehood**

Although a united Kurdish state is unlikely, Kurdish sovereignty is easy to imagine. Throughout history, glimpses of Kurdish states, or Kurdish autonomous zones have demonstrated the realities of Kurdish independence. The importance of the land inhabited by the Kurds cannot be overstated, particularly in geo-political terms. Not only has Kurdistan historically served as a buffer zone between countries seeking to undermine their neighbors, but the greater Kurdish region contains significant resource wealth. Gunter (2013) emphasizes that, "the Kurds sit on a great deal of the Middle East's oil and on its possibly even more important water resources" (p. 453). These resources

have proved to be a blessing and a curse.

This bountiful land has aided Kurds in their autonomous pursuits, lending them economic support. The inverse to this has prevailed in states' fierce protection of their borders to retain economically important regions. Iraq proved to be a salient example of this, reacting violently to the KRG's 2017 referendum. This resource competition, however, is not the only motivating factor in state repression of Kurdish autonomy movements.

An autonomous Kurdish state separating from one country may spark further Kurdish independence movements. Something like a pan-Kurdish state could emerge out of this strategic region, creating a powerful neighbor with understandable grievances against their previous sovereigns. As some such as Ayatolla Ali Khamenei have said, an independent Kurdish state would be akin to a "new Israel" (Nada & Crahan, 2021). Although this argument ignores the continual historical residence of Kurds, it does align with Kurdish appeals to great powers, like the United States. A Kurdish state would very likely turn to great powers for security and legitimacy. They reside in an unfriendly neighborhood; the same way Israel does. This occurred when the PYD in Rojava partnered with the United States to drive out ISIS. The intersection between Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq has proven to be a volatile geopolitical theatre. For countries seeking to repress their own restive Kurdish population, it sometimes appears to be a politically violent game of whack-a-mole.

While this analysis asserts the infeasibility of an independent Kurdish state, it acknowledges the unpredictable nature of geopolitics and international relations. Certainly, scholars of the Kurds did not anticipate the degree of de facto autonomy achieved by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, let alone the mass unrest of the 2011 Arab Spring. There is always room for significant restructuring of governance in the wake of conflict. This was the case in Iraqi Kurdistan's establishment of the KRG in the aftermath of the al-Anfal campaign and subsequent Operation Provide Comfort. This momentous unrest and violence created an environment for a semi-autonomous, singular political entity within the boundaries of one state. This is not alike to a pan-Kurdish state, but it is a notable degree of autonomy. The environment required to foster a pan-Kurdish state would likely necessitate a reconciliation of numerous Kurdish political and nationalist parties. Even more, it would require the unity of all these contentious parties and the acquiescence of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. This constellation of occurrences is not impossible, but unlikely enough to be an irrelevant notion. It is with this in mind that this analysis does not dismiss a future wherein an intended Kurdish state might emerge but affirms the high degree of improbability of its occurrence.



## **Conclusion**

Although Kurdish nationalism is still strong, history has proven to be unfriendly to a Kurdish state. Few can deny the historical legitimacy of the Kurdish people, but modern-day states leave no room for a peacefully established Kurdish state. For those groups willing to take a more militant approach, like the PKK or the YPG, the inability to secure the endorsement of a great power state has proven detrimental. The Kurds have and continue to fight valiantly. Unfortunately, the asymmetrical power of their Arab and Turkish neighbors has inevitably worn down Kurdish autonomy movements. Today's Kurds may aspire to a pan-Kurdish state, but key resistance leaders have given up the dream, including Abdullah Öcalan (Gunter, 2000, p. 853). This acknowledgment illustrates the infeasibility of a pan-Kurdish state. Furthermore, internal divisions, as shown in the Iraqi Kurdistan region further discredit the dream. The pan-Kurdish state is dead. Nevertheless, Kurdish nationalism is indispensable for the continued pursuit of democracy, political recognition, and justice for Kurds in the Middle East.

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## Exposed Expressions

**Sage Winkler**

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### *Abstract*

By breaking down complex ideas and forms into basic shapes, planes, and colors, creating dynamic compositions is more achievable. Avoiding distraction and focusing on these basic elements helps produce very readable and distinct designs.

Inspiration for this work comes from Käthe Kollwitz, an influential German expressionist in the early 20th century. This piece displays my connection to her artwork and themes which have influenced me for a long time. Her works show a certain sense of despair, longing, and connection. Focusing on the theme of connection, I worked to produce an abstract piece referencing her sculpture, *The Grieving Parents*, and woodcut, *The Parents*.

In my piece, I used flat planes of cardboard cut into triangles and arches to achieve a connected and contrasting sculpture. When creating the form, I utilized the differentiation between the harsh angles of the triangles and the soft curves of the arches to draw attention to the center of the form. The triangles twist up toward a pinnacle, sheltering the center arches, the heart of the piece. The applied black color contrasts both the intrinsic color of the cardboard and the minimal orange used in the centermost shape. Because this sculpture contains only fundamental shapes and planes, it produces obvious distinction within its form. Casting a dynamic shadow, this sculpture draws attention to itself and stands out from its environment.

*Keywords:* sculpture, artistic connection, 3D design



**Sage Winkler** is a sophomore Graphic Design and Illustration major, pursuing a minor in Spanish. They plan to keep pursuing art as well as possibly adding a psychology minor. They utilize abstraction, surrealism, and expressionism in their work. Sage hopes to create and teach art in the future, cultivating a supportive and safe space for others to explore their own creativity. This piece was created for Three-Dimensional Design taught by Teddy Osei.

## INTRODUCTION

This piece was a project for my 3D Design class. Our objective was to investigate the repetition of flat planes to construct a non-objective sculptural object to define space in a visually engaging manner using positive and negative space, along with repetition and rhythm, to create visual unity. As inspiration, I referenced Käthe Kollwitz, a German graphic artist and sculptor. According to Britannica (2023), she was an “eloquent advocate for victims of social injustice, war, and inhumanity.” Much of her work revolves around showing the struggles of oppressed people groups during the Russian Revolution of 1917, the German Revolution of 1918, and the rise of Soviet communism, along with many others. Kollwitz’s designs utilized etchings, lithographs, woodcuts, and drawings. She also created sculptures with various materials, including a granite monument for her son, showing her and her husband’s pain and grieving. Britannica (2023) claims that “Kollwitz was the last great practitioner of German Expressionism and is often considered to be the foremost artist of social protest in the 20th century.” Her work is very dynamic, expressive, and evokes many emotions—which is why I was drawn to her.

I first saw Käthe’s work in a book my uncle gave me. He told me that a lot of his art is influenced by older woodcuts like the ones in the book. He works with lithographs and linoleum prints to create unique pieces. I was just starting to make more art when my uncle gave me this book. The different pieces in the book inspired me and helped me develop my style, and even though there were hundreds of pieces, I kept going back to Käthe’s woodcuts because they displayed so much emotion. If you look at her work, it’s evident that most of Kollwitz’s pieces have a dark tone which shows tragedy, loss, and distressing emotions as I previously mentioned. Starting out, a lot of my art had similar themes and tones. I was going through a really difficult time in my life, and art was one of the ways I coped. Her work inspired me because it displayed negative feelings in such an expressive and beautiful way. I wanted to show more of that in the things I made, so I started trying to replicate some of the works in my book with ink or pencil. Eventually, I used them as references for bigger pieces, emulating her style, but creating my own figures. With this sculpture, I wanted to be able to show that emotion and style in a different way that shows how much I’ve progressed.

These three pieces by Kollwitz are all centered around the same idea. While Kollwitz did focus on social issues, she also illustrated some of her own struggles. These three pieces show the grief experienced by her and her husband after the death of their son Peter. The first, *The Grieving Parents* (Figure

1), she sculpted after World War I, saying that it was not only in memory of her son but also “for all the parents who lost children in the war.” The second, *The Parents* (Figure 2), was centered around the same idea, but to me, displays even more hopelessness. She chose to show the pain inflicted by the violence of war instead of displaying the violence itself. The third, *The Lovers* (Figure 3), is very similar to the two other pieces. One thing that I find especially interesting is how Kollwitz used negative space in her woodcuts to make a spotlight. In *Exposed Expressions*, I tried to create that same visual spotlight by using both positive and negative space, while also trying to display a similar theme to the three pieces above.

Instead of conveying a negative mood as I did when I first referenced Käthe’s work, I wanted to make a piece centered around hope and connection. As I’ve made more art, I’ve moved from making pieces with dark tones to more that are either neutral or bright and happier. When looking at my sculpture, I don’t think that most people would get the same meaning I do, however, with the shapes, colors, and negative space, there is an obvious central focal point, surrounded by a somewhat chaotic series of triangles. My intention was to focus on the motion of the figures holding each other as in Figure 2 and Figure 3, then make a central structure that showed the connection between those two people. Letting myself focus mostly on shapes and contrast rather than the literal representation helped me make a more effective and dynamic piece that others can see many meanings from—or even just appreciate the form.



**Figure 1.** *The Grieving Parents* by Käthe Kollwitz.



**Figure 2.** *The Parents* by Käthe Kollwitz.



**Figure 3.** *The Lovers* by Käthe Kollwitz.





*Exposed Expressions.* Artwork by Sage Winkler



*Exposed Expressions.* Artwork by Sage Winkler



*Exposed Expressions.* Artwork by Sage Winkler



*Exposed Expressions.* Artwork by Sage Winkler



*Exposed Expressions.* Artwork by Sage Winkler



*Exposed Expressions.* Artwork by Sage Winkler

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